MISS PAT in the OLD WORLD

PEMBERTON GINTHER

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JUDITH STOOD LIKE AN IMAGE OF POLITE BUT RESTRAINED DISAPPROVAL.

MISS PAT

IN THE

OLD WORLD

BY

PEMBERTON GINTHER

FRONTISPIECE BY

THE AUTHOR

PHILADELPHIA

THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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Miss Pat in the Old World

CHAPTER I

THE SEWING-ROOM AT GREYCROFT

"THERE, it's done at last, and not a bit too soon, either," said Patricia, holding up a filmy lace underslip. "You lose your bet, Judy dear."

Judith, who was curled up on the big padded pattern box, tossed her pale locks with a superior air.

"I never bet, Miss Pat," she said reprovingly. "And I certainly wouldn't *gamble* on anything that was to be part of Elinor's wedding dress. I only said you wouldn't get it done, and *you* said you'd show me—even if you had to lose——"

"Well, it's a beauty, anyway," hurriedly interposed Miss Jinny, letting her work, a silky mass of pale blue chiffon, huddle down unheeded in her lap while she cocked her

head critically at the lacy slip which Patricia was holding up for inspection. "You surely can sew, Patricia Kendall. I don't believe even Mary here could have done better."

Mary Miller, the pale model whom Miss Jinny had brought back to live with her and her pretty little old mother in their cozy house on the Back Road, and who had been very active with her skilful needle during the hasty preparation of Elinor's wedding outfit, smiled assent, stitching busily on the dainty boudoir cap that she was finishing in the slow-coming June twilight.

Judith sat up straight and reached a careful hand to the airy garment, examining the seams in a judicial manner.

"It *is* wonderfully well done, Patricia," she said graciously. "I didn't know you could make such imperceptible stitches, particularly in such an *impalpable* material."

Patricia laughed good-naturedly as she folded the slip in smooth array on the long sewing table.

"My word, you're putting it on thick, Ju," she said, appreciatively. "Aren't you

afraid your supply of good high-flavored words may give out before the marriage feast is finished? I wouldn't be too wasteful of them, if I were you. David and Tom Hughes don't get here till tomorrow, you know, and it will be two whole days before you have a chance at the rest of the people."

Miss Jinny chuckled, but Judith remained impressively lost in thought for at least a whole minute. Then she slid down off the pattern box and walked to the open door.

"I'm going to see Mrs. Shelly," she said loftily. "Shall I tell her you won't be home to supper, Miss Jinny?"

Miss Jinny grunted, biting off a rebellious thread.

"Mary'll be along soon's she gets the cap done," added Patricia. "You'd better tell Elinor you're going. She may want you to do some errand for her."

Judith closed the screen door carefully behind her and went sedately across the flagged pavement to the back hall door, where she disappeared without another word.

"I wonder what's gotten into Judy the

last two days?" said Patricia thoughtfully. "She's too stiff and top-lofty for words. If she weren't so alarmingly healthy I'd think she was getting some strange new illness."

Miss Jinny shook her head wisely. "That child is just breaking her heart about Elinor's going off and leaving her for three whole months. That's the size of it," she declared emphatically. "I wasn't going to say anything, but I've seen it coming on for a fairly long spell now. She's too proud to say anything and so she puts on airs to hide it."

Patricia, with her big gray eyes wide and troubled, sat down on the edge of the pattern box and faced Miss Jinny.

"Do you really think that is what is the trouble?" she asked seriously.

"Certain sure," replied Miss Jinny promptly. "She's just wrapped up in you two girls and she's never been away from you a night in her life, according to your accounts. She's got mighty strong feelings under that cool outside, as you well know, and this idea of separation is just killing

her. She goes to mama, every time, when it gets too much for her, but, lands alive, even that doesn't seem to do her much good. She's getting paler and more peaked every day. I'm surprised you didn't notice it."

"I've noticed she was—" began Patricia, but broke off abruptly as Elinor stood at the window, her lovely face framed in the square of dark woodwork and the jumbled colors of the garden beds showing behind her. Patricia's heart leaped at the picture she made and the thought sprang to her quick lips.

"I don't wonder poor Judy's breaking her heart at losing you, Norn," she cried, "for you're the sweetest thing in ten counties, and an angel besides!"

Elinor's face grew grave as she turned to come in.

"What do you mean about Judith?" she asked, slipping an arm about Patricia as she sank down beside her on the wide box. "Has she been saying anything to you?"

Patricia shook her head and was about to answer when Mary Miller rose, laying down the finished cap, and, with a pleasant good-night, passed out.

Miss Jinny looked after her approvingly.

"I declare that girl's got a lot of sense," she said in indirect answer to Elinor's question. "Trouble has taught her to see things. She put me up to what poor Judith was going through. Said she knew that hungry look in her eyes and that sort of homesick way she hung on you. Saw her crying, too, one day when we were all planning what we'd do when you and Bruce had left."

Elinor drew a quick breath and dropped her arm from Patricia's shoulders.

"Do you really mean that Judith is worrying so much because I am going away?" she asked with a shocked amazement in her gentle voice.

Miss Jinny creased the chiffon negligee with absent fingers, while she kept her rather protruding pale blue eyes fixed searchingly on Elinor's troubled face.

"Well, you see it is this way," she said slowly. "None of you folks noticed it, in the hurry of getting things together so unexpectedly for this wedding, and after Mary had opened my eyes, I kept hoping the poor child might wear the edge off her

grieving before the day came. And I didn't know that it would make any difference anyway. You and Bruce had to get to Holland double quick, since he got that commission for the other panels, and she's in good hands here with Hannah Ann and Patricia and mama and me—not to mention David—and Mr. Spicer when he comes to live with us next month——"

Elinor broke in on her slow speech ruthlessly.

"Are you sure—positively sure—that Judith is really making herself miserable because she's losing me?" she demanded.

Miss Jinny nodded emphatically.

"That's what," she declared sententiously. "Eating her heart out piecemeal."

Elinor turned to Patricia. "Have you known this, too, Patricia?" she asked, with her eyes intent, searching Patricia's face for the truth.

Patricia groaned in spirit, but could not dissemble.

"I haven't really known just what was the matter with her till now," she confessed, uneasy for the effect of her words. "I've

noticed that she's been awfully low recently and as edgy as a two-edged sword, but I thought she might be getting a fever or something—only she's not feverish. Perhaps——"

Elinor swept her halting speculations aside with a passionate gesture.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" she cried, with a sort of anger in her soft tone. "I ought to have known it. I ought to have seen it for myself. I've been blind, selfish, or I would have guessed it long ago. Poor little Ju, she must have been suffering dreadfully! If I'd only known it sooner—" she gave a quick, sharp sigh and fell suddenly silent and thoughtful.

"You couldn't help it," urged Patricia reassuringly. "You had to go right off or wait here at home while Bruce spent the whole summer in Holland, and what would be the good of that? Bruce has feelings, too."

"And she's not a baby any more," added Miss Jinny. "She's past thirteen, and you're leaving her with us. You've no need to feel it, Elinor."

Elinor frowned meditatively and her eyes

were absent, as though she were looking back on the years that had gone.

"That's all very true," she said gently, laying her hand softly on Patricia's arm and looking at Miss Jinny with grateful tenderness. "You both are sensible and dear, and I know Ju would be taken the best of care of while I was away. But she's never been away from me since mother left her, a tiny red little baby, to me, and I've taken care of her night and day since father died and left us three girls alone in the world. All those years in the boarding school she slept in a cot by my bed in the dormitory. She's been with me all her life, and you can't expect her to not to feel it. I felt badly enough myself, but now, *now* I've simply got to find some other way."

She jumped up with sudden resolution and with a light coming into her flushed face.

"I'll be back in ten minutes," she said abruptly. "Wait here for me, please."

Patricia and Miss Jinny looked at each other as she disappeared into the shrubberies.

"Bruce is out there," said Patricia apprehensively.

Miss Jinny nodded as she gathered up her hemming again.

"She'll manage all right, don't you fret, Miss Pat," she said comfortably. "Everything happens for the best, and I'm positive it's a heap better for her to know how the land lies. I never did care for secrets, and I'm glad little Judy's secret is found out in time."

Patricia settled back, watching the flashing needle as it wove the tiny stitches in the diaphanous cloud of blue chiffon. Her mind was wandering over the past and she was silently reconstructing the united years they spent at the dull cheap boarding school, where Elinor's patience and sweetness had softened many of their hard corners and where her unselfish love had made the struggle for existence seem a sort of pleasant game. She thought of burdens that had been so lightly borne, and the memory of the past happy year, with its change from poverty to comfort and with its varying fortunes, capped at last by the

discovery of their lost brother, seemed to her musing mind merely the reward of Elinor's sisterly devotion. Her heart overflowed with love and admiration.

"It's a shame for her to be worried now, just when she's going to have such a splendid trip," she broke out resentfully, her sympathies entirely with Elinor. "I think Judy's a regular little pig to make a fuss and spoil things at the last minute!"

Miss Jinny snapped the last thread and laid down her work.

"Don't be hard on her, Miss Pat," she said, with an indulgent smile for Patricia's vehemence. "Love is a very good thing, even if it does put the harness on you once in a while. Elinor would a heap rather have Judy breaking her heart for her than not. We can't pick and choose, you know. We've got to take it all just as it comes."

Patricia thought of the years of Miss Jinny's devotion to her dear little deaf mother, and understood.

"You're such a dear, sensible *duck!*" she cried, dropping on her knees beside her and catching the hard hands in her own. "I

don't know what I'd ever do without you to bring me down to reason. I'm such a dreadful weather-vane."

Miss Jinny chuckled and patted the glowing cheek. "It's little wonder we're all higgledy-piggledy," she said. "What with wedding gowns at a moment's notice and the spring housecleaning not fairly done, I'm all turned upside down myself."

"And you've got to get your things ready for your own marriage in two weeks!" cried Patricia. "You've been slaving for us and letting us have Mary Miller, too. She ought to have been getting your things ready. You know that's why you brought her out from town with you. Mr. Spicer must think we're the limit——"

"Don't fret," reiterated Miss Jinny, with her head erect. "I reckon Mr. Spicer isn't concerning himself about things he isn't asked to. He's a man with a mind for other stuff than apron strings, I hope. And as for my clothes, if an old maid like me can't manage to get her duds together without any fuss, she oughtn't to be such a fool as to get married. Mary Miller needed the fresh

air, and Mr. Spicer wanted her to have it. It's been sort of a probation for her—these few weeks—and I'm grateful to Elinor for giving her the work."

"She's awfully nice, isn't she?" said Patricia warmly. "You'd never think she'd been a model and all that."

"She's come out good because she's got a good soul," said Miss Jinny sagely. "Nothing will *make* people good if they haven't got it in them. I'm looking for a great deal of comfort from Mary Miller, I can tell you."

"Didn't she make the darlingest wreaths for Miriam and Madelon's veils?" exclaimed Patricia. "I think it's so lovely to have the bridesmaids with those little ducks of veils, don't you? It's so much prettier than hats—more *bride-y*. Anybody can wear hats to anything,—but veils!"

"Speaking of Haldens, it'll seem strange to have the Carson house filled up with that raft of children," commented Miss Jinny. "One family of Haldens has always been about as much as this village could stand, but with *the* Haldens all home, and the Car-

son house full of another batch of Will Haldens, there promises to be lively times ahead."

Patricia's eyes twinkled in anticipation.

"I'm glad they weren't here last summer, when we were working so hard," she said, diverted for the moment from the thought of Elinor and her possible errand. "We'll have lots of fun this year. David will be home after his visit at the Hughes' is over, and Tom is coming for a whole month, you know, and that will add to the general gayety. It's a good thing you're not streaking off abroad like Elinor, Miss Jinny, or I don't know who'd take the task of keeping an eye on us."

Miss Jinny chuckled and began a reply, when there was a sound of footsteps on the gravel and Elinor and Bruce stood at the side door, peering into the little room with eager, excited faces. The fading pink of the afterglow was on their erect and vigorous figures, and they looked strong and radiantly happy. Patricia felt that her sympathy for Elinor's distress had been useless.

"We've planned it all out," said Elinor,

gayly. "You've simply got to agree. We're going to telephone to the steamship company right away. Everything can be arranged perfectly and it will be the best thing all around!"

"What *do* you mean, Elinor Kendall?" cried Patricia, starting up. "What are you talking about? You're not going to stay home for Judy? It's positively wicked——"

Elinor laughed a rippling laugh of sheer satisfaction.

"Hardly—when Bruce has the panels to do," she replied. "But you and Judy are to go along a little later. Hannah Ann and Henry can take charge once again and David can come over to us after he has had his visit and camping trip."

Patricia stood perfectly still in the middle of the floor, with her big eyes wide and her breath coming fast.

"Do you mean it, Norn?" she asked almost in a whisper. "Do you mean that we shall go to *Holland?*"

"You better believe it," said Bruce vigorously. "You two kids have got to get your duds in shape and join us in New York

on the twentieth—there'll be a boat about that date, and we'll postpone our sailing till then so you'll have time to assemble yourselves. What do you think of it, Miss Pat? Does it appeal to your home-loving nature, or won't you leave dear old Greycroft? Judy can't well go alone, you know."

Patricia for once had no words. She could only breathe a deep breath of rapture and clasp her hands tightly over Bruce's strong fists, while she struggled with the lump in her throat that would not go down. Miss Jinny, with her eyes very bright and darting, puckered her mouth sidewise in silence, leaving the first word to the stricken Patricia, and Elinor beamed expectantly at the look in the big gray eyes, while Bruce, releasing one of his imprisoned hands, patted her encouragingly on the shoulder.

When she managed to speak the lump was still growing and her voice was husky with emotion.

"Greycroft *will* keep, you know," she faltered lamely. "Even Aunt Louise, who loved it so, was away lots—but *Holland!*

Oh, Bruce, you're going to be a perfectly heavenly brother-in-law!"

There was a peal of laughter at this, and then Judith's small voice from the opposite doorway.

"You seem to be having an awfully good time," she said wistfully, hesitating on the sill. "Is it secrets, or may I come in?"

Elinor sprang to her and caught her in a bear hug. "Of course it isn't secrets, Judy darling," she cried. "We've never had any secrets and we never shall. Patricia has some news for you, that's all."

Elinor's generosity in letting her break the joyful tidings almost choked Patricia, but the sight of Judith's pale little face looking at her with startled eyes brought her voice back with a throb of tenderness in it under the exultation.

"We're going to go to Holland, too," she announced. "Elinor and Bruce are going to wait and take us with them. And we're going to see the windmills and the sloats, and the blue-jacket cows, and, oh, everything. Why, Ju——"

She broke off in surprise as Judith flung

herself closer in Elinor's arms and burst into a storm of weeping, burying her blonde head against Elinor's shoulder and shaking with a tempest of sobs.

Miss Jinny held up her hand.

"You just let her alone," she said with kind wisdom. "She's all strung up, and this is so unexpected. She's been walking a tight rope and the solid ground under her feet seems too good to be true. She'll be all right when she's had her cry out."

Bruce nodded, and taking one of Judith's limp hands, he pressed it gently.

"Bawl away all you want, Judy machree," he encouraged her. "We know how you feel. Weep it all out while you're at it, for we've got enough handkerchiefs among us to keep you going till you're good and ready to stop."

Judith, being thus encouraged, did precisely what any other person would have done. She sat up, with her tears drying at once, and began to rejoice, Patricia joining in with great heartiness, and for a few moments nothing was thought of but the delights that waited the united group in the

cozy little land of dykes and windmills—Miss Jinny being as eager and as pleased as the others.

Suddenly Patricia looked blank and gave a little remorseful cry.

"What horrid, selfish wretches we are!" she exclaimed indignantly. "Here we are, chortling away like demons over our own fun, and never thinking about Miss Jinny's wedding!"

A stricken silence fell for a moment and before anyone could find words to atone, Miss Jinny gave a reassuring chuckle.

"Don't you fret about us," she said, with a twinkle in her pale blue eyes and a cock of her long head. "I guess Mr. Spicer and mama can take care of the blushing bride. You don't have to spoil your fun just to help an old critter like me get married. I don't know but what I may change my mind, anyway."

"Oh, Miss Jinny! How can you say such things!" cried Patricia, horrified at such sudden inconstancy of purpose in her reliable friend. "You surely wouldn't stop getting married just because we are gal-

loping off to Europe. Why, we'll have to stay home, Elinor. Won't we, Ju? I wouldn't——"

"Wait a bit," said Miss Jinny, her smile growing broader and great gratification in her voice. "I don't mean I ain't going to get married just the same; only I'm beginning to think I was wrong not to do like Mr. Spicer wanted me to at first. He's been about so much, you know, and a trip to Europe with mama and me didn't seem anything to him, but it was a mighty big mountain to me and I wouldn't give in to it. But now——" and she paused significantly.

"*You'll go!*" cried Patricia and Elinor in a breath. "Oh, do say you'll go!"

Judith, with her cheeks flaming, seized Miss Jinny's hands, crying, "Oh, please, please, *please!*" while Bruce tried to settle the matter by shaking hands heartily with Miss Jinny's unoccupied left and saying bouyantly, "We'll all go together, Miss Jinny, and we'll have the time of our lives, see if we don't!"

Miss Jinny looked at him with the light of sudden resolve in her prominent eyes.

She drew in a quick breath and gave Judith's hand a squeeze.

"I'll go," she announced resolutely. "I'll close the house and let Mary Miller stay with Mrs. Halden till the summer sewing and mending's done. I'll get married on the nineteenth, and the girls can bring mama over to meet us in New York on the twentieth. But I WON'T travel to Europe on the same boat with any newly-weds, I tell you that, Bruce Haydon. You and Elinor can pack off on the boat you've engaged and the rest of us'll take passage on the twentieth and meet you in Antwerp. That's my program, and I won't change it for the King of England and the Czar of Russia rolled into one. You may take it or leave it, and you'd better be mighty quick about it, for I've got to go home and begin to swing things, if I'm going to be a globe trotter."

"Of course, we'll take it—won't we, Elinor?" laughed Bruce admiringly. "You're a wonder and I know you'll put it through in great shape. You've saved us a lot of anxiety, Miss Jinny, and I'll try to show how grateful I am when the chance comes for it."

"Stuff and nonsense! I'm going to have a lot better time than poking along here all summer," said Miss Jinny stoutly. "Mama'll be crazy to go—she's always wanted to travel. It's so diverting to her to *see* things since she's so deaf. We're pretty near ready, anyway, and it won't take long to finish up. I'll use your phone right away and break it to Mr. Spicer before he's had dinner and left the house."

Judith fluttered after her to the door.

"Mayn't I go and tell Mrs. Shelly?" she asked impulsively. "I do so want to see how she looks when she knows she's going abroad."

Elinor made a motion of dissent, but Miss Jinny chuckled indulgently.

"Yes, run along and break the joyful tidings," she replied. "We may as well start off with a bang. I'll be over right after dinner and talk things over with her. Ask Mary Miller to get ten pounds of tar camphor at Smith's when she goes for the yeast cake tonight."

Judith flew off and Miss Jinny disappeared in the back hall door, and the three

others were left in the flower-scented twilight of the disheveled sewing-room.

Patricia withdrew her absent eyes from a delicately tinted cloud that glowed behind the dark green branches of the shrubberies, and smiled at Elinor and Bruce, drawing in a deep breath of great content.

"It's all coming out so bee-utifully, isn't it?" she sighed. "It just seems as though we simply couldn't be good enough to deserve it all. It's heavenly to have a real wedding with veils and flower strewings right in the family, but—*Holland for a whole summer!* Oh, it's too gorgeous to believe!"

Elinor laughed softly, slipping her arm through Patricia's and drawing her close.

"You'll have to make over all your plans," she began, when Patricia gave a start and dropped her arm.

"My word! Won't they be surprised!" she cried with dancing eyes. "I've simply got to rush over to Halden's this very minute, Norn. Miriam's going to send out those notes for our tennis match on the twenty-second tonight, and I've got to stop her."

Bruce called after her as she slipped out through the garden.

"Don't forget we eat in fifteen minutes, and there'll be tall talk!"

"I'll be there, don't fret!" she flung back over her shoulder as she sped into the sweet-smelling twilight. "I don't care about the dinner, but I've got to hear everything—for it's about Holland, Holland, *Holland!*"

CHAPTER II

WEDDING BELLS

"IS everything ready?" asked David. Patricia nodded carefully, fearful of disturbing the filmy little veil that floated from her bright crown of waving gold. The tiny wreath of orange blossoms distinguished her as the maid of honor and she was feeling her own importance very much just then. She smoothed her airy pale-green draperies with a delicate gesture and wondered, while she nodded to David's question, how any girl could be so foolish as to choose to be a bride when she might go on for years and years having the fun of being bridesmaid ever so often—if she chose and if her friends would be obliging enough to marry and ask her.

She and David were in the music-room. The sun was making a pool of gold at her white-slippered feet and outside the birds sang riotously among the leafy branches,

while the roses of the garden flung their fragrance across the dewy grass to mingle with the odors of the spicy shrubberies. It was a morning made for happiness and Patricia's heart was keeping time and tune.

"Aren't you glad you don't have to be married, Frad?" she asked, as she daintily adjusted his twisted tie. "Poor Elinor and Bruce haven't the ghost of a chance of any fun. Everybody will simply stare them to death, and they'll have to stand and smile like Chessy-cats and shake hands after they come home from church, while *we* can do as we please most of the time, and we're dressed up beautifully, too."

David grunted as he held his chin aloft for her ministrations.

"We've got enough to worry about," he said, gloomily. "You may like parading up the aisle before a whole gang of goggling boobs, but I don't. When I'm married, I'll——"

But Patricia did not wait for his future to be revealed. The sound of wheels spun her about towards the door and she listened eagerly.

"It's Henry," she announced breathlessly. "Come on, Frad, and see Elinor. You've got to get out before we go, you know. The cars are blocking up the drive. Hurry."

Bruce and the best man had gone in the first honking car, and the bridesmaids were excitedly getting into the second that stood panting at the stepping-stone, while the ushers were waiting in a group for the third big limousine to get into line. Henry with the cutunder with its curtains down close was grinning in the far distance of the graveled sweep.

David was embarrassed and uneasy at the thought of facing Elinor alone in her bridal splendor, and hesitated on the threshold.

"I'm late, don't you see?" he stammered. "I—I—guess I'll wait."

Patricia's rosy lips took a very firm line and she laid a commanding finger on his reluctant sleeve.

"You come along with me," she said decisively. "Elinor isn't going to eat you, you goose. She only wants to see the family

a second before she starts, and I think it's just sweet of her to care so much about us now, poor thing. You haven't been long in the family, but you're going to make up for lost time, now you are in it."

She drew him swiftly into the south parlor, where Elinor stood, and produced him like a trophy of war.

"Here he is, Elinor," she announced. "But he doesn't deserve to be kissed good-bye, for he tried to sneak off——"

Elinor, lovely in splendid shimmering satin and simple tulle, rippled in such an everyday fashion that David took heart, and when she swept aside the filmy coverings and bent forward, he gave her a hearty kiss and spoke out his wishes for happiness in such a sincere voice that Patricia was mollified.

"I told you you'd be sorry if you didn't," she said triumphantly as she opened the door for his exit. "You won't see another bride like Elinor in a hurry. Isn't she the loveliest thing? Oh, don't stop to talk *now*. Get those girls off and get your car out of the way. It's nearly twelve, and

we'll be late if you dawdle around any longer." And she gave him an impatient push.

"Well, I like that," he began rather indignantly, when the car that had taken Bruce and Mr. Grantly to the church swept honking up to the front entrance. Mr. Grantly hopped out and hurried up the box-edged walk to the portico, where he sprang up the steps two at a time, and rushed into David and Patricia as they hurried out to meet him.

"Have you got a ring anywhere about? A plain ring?" he panted in great agitation, brushing past them to the library where Hannah Ann was pinning a stray wisp of Miss Jinny's scanty curling locks into place.

Both started, and stared, and spoke at once.

"My goodness gracious alive! You've lost the ring!" gasped Miss Jinny, nonplussed for once.

"Lands sakes, you don't think we've got weddin' rings up our sleeves, do you?" demanded Hannah Ann with asperity,

jolted out of her respect by this untoward happening. "How come you ain't got a ring?"

Mr. Grantly hastily explained that somehow, *somehow*, it had been overlooked, at which Hannah Ann gave a snort of contempt and Miss Jinny gasped again. Patricia was about to offer her class ring, when the knob of the south parlor door turned and Elinor looked out from her bridal radiance to ask the reason of the delay.

Mr. Grantly had another bad moment when he again explained stumblingly the omission of the ring, but Elinor's sense of humor came to the rescue of his embarrassment and her soft laugh pealed out so gayly that they all saw at once that it was in the nature of a joke, instead of a tragedy—this forgetting to bring the wedding ring from its pink cotton nest in Bruce's chiffonier in town.

"It's awfully good of you to take it that way," said the repentant Grantly to Elinor. "But it is deucedly awkward for Bruce, with the people all waiting and fidgeting in the church—I've simply got to get

hands on some ring. Can't any of you help me?"

Hannah Ann coughed suggestively, and they all turned to her.

"You know I got Miss Louie's weddin' ring, Miss Elinor," she said stumblingly. "And it's got di'monds in it, and she was fond of Mr. Bruce, and—and—I'd mortal like to give it to you both for a weddin' present, if I might make free. Miss Louie only left it to me 'cause there wasn't anyone else who'd known her near and close as me."

Elinor laid a gentle hand on Hannah Ann's rough, red one.

"How sweet of you to offer, Hannah Ann," she said gratefully. "It is the best ring that I could ever have and a good omen for a happy f ture. I know Mr. Bruce will love it, too. Can you get it quickly?"

Hannah Ann dived into the pocket which she always wore in her full black skirt and produced a little box.

"I had it all ready to give you, anyway," she said, handing it to the relieved Mr.

Grantly. "I was going to ask you if you'd take it when I got a chance."

Elinor handed the box to the palpitating best man, and as he tore off down the steps to the impatient machine, she turned again to Hannah Ann and taking her hard, wrinkled face between her two white hands, she kissed her gratefully.

"That's for all you've done for us, Hannah Ann," she said, rather too seriously, Patricia thought. There was no use making one feel so solemn and weepy at a wedding, but Hannah Ann evidently enjoyed it, for she bent down and took the hem of Elinor's veil and carried it to her lips in a gesture that would have been mightily graceful and poetic in a younger and more emotional person.

"You've been a light in the house since you-all came," she replied with a burst of feeling that surprised them all. "Little did I think that doleful February day when I was so dreadin' to see you three girls, that I'd turn to you like I've done. I was real hurt at the thought of strangers acomin' in where my dear Miss Louie'd

lived so beautiful and happy, and I begrudged you the right to come in, that I did."

"Well, you've made up for it long ago," cried Patricia, much moved. "You've stood by us like a trump. You've had a lot to put up with, Hannah Ann—what with candy-making and boarders. We couldn't have gotten through without you, that's certain."

"I guess Hannah Ann knew that Mrs. Kendall would like it, too, and that helped her," said Miss Jinny with a wise cock of her resplendent lace hat. "Well, it's all over now and done for, and the clock is just going to strike. Henry's at the side door, Miss Pat, and there isn't another minute to fool around speechifying."

Patricia flew for Elinor's lovely shower bouquet and gloves, and hurried out through the tunnel of striped canvas after Elinor to the carriage, where Hannah Ann and Miss Jinny adjusted the bridal draperies with loving care, leaving only a small corner of the back seat for Patricia to squeeze into. The door slammed and she

and Elinor were alone in the shelter of the curtained carriage.

"Just think, Norn, how differently we felt that day we first saw Greycroft in this very carriage," said Patricia joyously. "Then we were happy, too, but with such another sort of happiness. We really didn't know what comfort and pleasure was, did we? We'd been so used to struggling along in that horrid boarding school that we didn't dream of how much fun there was in the world."

"It has been a wonderful year and a half for us, Patsy darling," agreed Elinor, her eyes starry with grateful tears. "It seems as if we were being led through all sorts of troubles just to make us understand how to enjoy things more. I can't ever forget how good people have been to us, and I'm going to try always, *always*, to pass it on to someone who needs it."

Patricia looked at her adoringly. "You've always been an angel!" she declared ardently. "You think of other people first, and give up your own way. Oh, if I only were more like you!"

"Stuff!" responded Elinor, buttoning her long glove. "You're a good bit better off as you are——"

"It isn't stuff!" cried Patricia indignantly. "You're always kind—you know perfectly well you are. Take this very moment, for instance. *I'd* have gone off vaingloriously in Mr. Grantly's big limousine, but you remembered that Henry had driven Aunt Louise to her wedding when he was awfully young and you chose the old cutunder and Major. And you are going slowly so Hannah Ann and Miss Jinny may get to the church before we do. So, there, Elinor Kendall! I'm twice the pig you are, and you know it!"

This final argument was too much for Elinor and she went off into soft peals of laughter that made the sedate Henry on the front seat shake his head anxiously, fearing the bride might be growing hysterical.

"Here we are at the church!" exclaimed Patricia, peering out as the carriage stopped. "There are mobs and mobs of carriages and machines! I don't see how the people ever got into the church—it's so little."

The door opened and Mr. Halden, who was to take charge of Elinor, held out his hand for Patricia, who sprang lightly out and stood aside for Elinor to alight. A great wave of excitement swept over her as she hurried up the striped lane into the vestibule where the bridal party was gathered. A wedding suddenly seemed a more serious matter than it had before.

When Elinor's train and veil were properly adjusted and her bouquet just in the right position, the bridesmaids and ushers formed in their proper lines and stood waiting the signal from the organ. The door was open a crack to hear the signal, and the first notes of the wedding march smote Patricia's ears and heart with a strange pang. As the lines swung noiselessly into the middle aisle she glanced back at Elinor where she stood waiting her moment of entrance, and the vision of her loveliness deepened that strange pain at her heart.

"I'm an awful goose," she told herself as she walked sedately to the rhythm of the swelling notes down the red-carpeted aisle where she had hurried to so many services.

"Elinor's madly happy and we're all madly happy. I don't see why that music makes one feel so creepy."

Nevertheless her knees were actually trembling so that she was thankful to have reached the chancel steps in safety and that troublesome lump that threatened tears was rising slowly in her slender throat.

"Only idiots cry at weddings," she told herself savagely, swallowing resolutely as she took her place to await Elinor's coming. She faced the audience with the desperation of necessity, feeling that her face must betray her; but all eyes were on the bride, who was close behind on Mr. Halden's arm—a mystic, veiled figure of suggested grace and beauty—and Patricia's agitation passed unnoticed.

As Elinor reached her position in front of the rail and Bruce, attended by Mr. Grantly, came forward to meet her, Patricia had a sudden sense of the strangeness of it all and felt very alien and alone. The banked flowers about the chancel rail, the soft undertone of the organ, the familiar voice of the rector, all seemed unreal and

remote, like some dream pageant, of which she was not a part. The sense of loneliness was so intense that she felt the tears overflow as she took Elinor's bouquet and mechanically loosened the ripped glove finger of her left hand for the diamond-studded band that glittered in Bruce's steady hand, but she showed no other sign of agitation, and her fingers were deft and swift when the time came for unpinning the short veil that left Elinor's charming, earnest face free from the shrouding tulle.

Then, as the benediction was pronounced and Bruce and Elinor rose to receive the hearty handshake and congratulation of the smiling rector, Patricia was conscious of a swift revulsion of feeling. A warm sense of happy companionship swept through her, and the little church with its crowding faces, the ushers and bridesmaids, Judith strewing flowers, and Elinor and Bruce pacing slowly down the aisle, were rapturously hers again.

She enjoyed every minute of the stately exit and wished that it might be prolonged.

CHAPTER III

GOOD-BYE TO ELINOR

"ISN'T it a pity it's so short?" she sighed to Miriam Halden as they were crowding into the machine to follow Bruce and Elinor's carriage. "It seems such a snip of time, after all the weeks of getting ready for it."

"Oh, well, there's the reception and the breakfast, you know," said Miriam comfortably. "It won't be over for quite a while yet."

Patricia beamed. "We'll have lots of fun at the breakfast," she agreed. "We of the bridal party have the big square table in the center all to ourselves, and the decorations are perfectly lovely. So's the breakfast, too, for that matter."

"I'm glad of that, for I'm almost starved," responded Miriam practically. "I didn't get half a bite this morning. Madelon routed me out at daybreak almost to get

those flowers for the altar vases and I don't believe a soul noticed them."

"Indeed, *I* did. They're perfect, and I'm sure Elinor saw them, too," declared Margaret Howes, who had come all the way from Nova Scotia to be one of the bridesmaids. "It's a pity Griffin isn't here. She's simply crazy over rhododendrons."

Patricia nodded. "Doesn't it seem strange to think of her away down in the Argentine?" she said, thoughtfully. "The Academy wouldn't seem like itself without her striped apron."

"Bottle Green's off, too, you know," added Margaret smiling. "She's in Italy making studies for a fountain that she's to do for the W. C. T. U. of Elmira, New Jersey."

"The modeling class used to be great fun," said Patricia, a little regretfully. "But since I didn't have enough ability to go on with it, I can't be so sorry as you people who are going back next year."

"Did you see Doris Leighton?" asked Margaret, as the car stopped at the stepping-stone. "She's looking perfectly stunning,

but I happen to know that she's working like a slave, doing secretary work for a society friend of hers, so she can send Geraldine and her mother to the country. Mrs. Leighton's been sick—nervous prostration or something—and Doris has taken care of her like an angel."

"Oh, I wish we'd known!" cried Patricia, her mind flying to the possibilities of Greycroft as a refuge for the shattered nerves of poor Mrs. Leighton. "We might have asked her out here. I'd love to help Doris. She's turned out to be so fine after all."

"Yes," agreed Margaret, following her out of the car. "Trouble certainly made her. I guess her father's failure was the best thing that ever happened to her. Hurry up, Miss Pat, some of the people are coming already and we have to smooth ourselves out and hustle in to Elinor and Bruce before the reception can begin."

Miriam and Madelon Halden and Judith were decorously in their proper places in the south parlor, where, under a canopy of simple green flanked by pyramids of white

lilies, the bridal couple stood awaiting the line of smiling friends that was beginning to form in the spacious hall.

Patricia flew to the vacant spot next Elinor, whispering a joyous comment on the perfection of the church ceremony as she straightened a crumpled corner of the long veil. Henry swept aside the satin barrier from the wide hall door and the well-dressed, affable throng slowly surged into the big room.

The first one to reach the bride was not, as Patricia had hoped, either Mrs. Shelly or Margaret Howes, but Mrs. Hand, the village toady, whom both Elinor and Patricia had shunned as openly as good breeding would let them.

She came floating toward Elinor with her arms outstretched, and the dainty white bow of her widow's weed crushed by her theatrically bent head.

"Oh, my dear, my dear! How this takes me back!" she exclaimed, and overcome by emotion, she flung her arms about Elinor, veil and all, in a moist and tremulous embrace.

Patricia was furious. "Silly woman!" she breathed between her teeth. "She's pretending she knew Aunt Louise well enough to be at *her* wedding. I hope no one'll believe it. And she's pulled Elinor's wreath all over her eye! I wish I could settle her!"

But Mrs. Hand, her ardor somewhat chilled by the quiet gaze that Elinor fixed on her, withdrew somewhat hastily from her affectionate pose, murmuring, with her handkerchief to her eyes, that a widow's heart was over-tender for these festive scenes and that she must retire to live over the past in her own humble cottage.

Elinor merely smiled on her as she went, but Patricia, arranging the flowery wreath and adjusting the veil, muttered wrathfully her opinion of the tenderness of the afflicted lady's feelings.

"She hasn't any more heart than a fish," she said. "Hannah Ann says Aunt Louise couldn't bear her!"

"Never mind, Miss Pat dear," said Elinor soothingly. "She didn't do us any real damage. Don't worry over the veil.

I'm going to take it off in a little while, anyway. Here's Mrs. Shelly and Miss Jinny and I've simply *got* to kiss them, whether it's the proper thing or not."

Everything went off splendidly after that, and Patricia reveled in gayety and good will that pervaded all. Mrs. Hand and those lonely moments in the church were forgotten, and she had two hours of unalloyed happiness at the reception and the following breakfast, where the wedding party enjoyed itself as no party Patricia had ever known.

The consciousness of being helpful even at that time, added to her satisfaction, for she had found a moment to intercept Bruce and Elinor alone and put the case of Mrs. Leighton before them, with the suggestion that she might be invited to Greycroft immediately. Bruce, Hannah Ann and Elinor had taken swift council together, with the result that Patricia had the invitation tripping on her tongue when she met Doris, and the joy of their first meeting since that night when Geraldine was so ill was heightened for her by the light that sprang

into Doris' eyes as she realized that now indeed the past was forgotten and a real friendship established.

The memory of her glowing face was before Patricia as she waited with the others for Elinor to come down-stairs in her street clothes for the final good-byes. She was tired and excited, but deeply happy, and her face was flushed and radiant as she turned to Miss Jinny, who was holding the bridal bouquet which she had caught in its whirling fall as Elinor flung it to the group below her when she ran up-stairs to change her dress.

"We've had a splendid time, haven't we?" she said, slipping her hand within Miss Jinny's arm. "And I've found out something that's worth knowing."

Miss Jinny smiled indulgently on her. "Have you, indeed?" she said appreciatively. "Share it with me, won't you, child?"

Patricia made a little mouth. "Oh, you know it already, no doubt," she demurred. "It's only new to me. It's just this that no matter how gay one is, if one isn't unself-

ish one can't be really, *really* happy. Leighton never looked like she does now, though she used to be the gayest girl in her set. And you know how hard it is to make Elinor dismal— Here she comes. Oh, isn't she the sweetest thing in that dull green."

Patricia flew to intercept Elinor, but Judith was there before her, and together they clung about the slender green-clad figure that had been all they had known of mother and home for so many years.

"Oh, Elinor, if you only weren't going till we were ready," lamented Judith, forgetting the gay assembly and her airs of propriety in the face of the parting.

Patricia squeezed Judith's hand as she released Elinor after a last long kiss, and though there were tears in her own eyes, she spoke gayly.

"Never mind, Judy darling, it won't be a wink before we're getting out our spy-glasses to find her on the dock in Dutchland. Here, take this old slipper and fling it as hard as you can. Hurry, or they'll be gone!"

And Judith, sniffing, hurled the wilted

slipper—one of those in which Patricia had walked home from the ball in Hilltown that disastrous night when David Carson's motor had broken down and she had torn the borrowed dress—and she hit the bridegroom directly on the bridge of the nose, much to her own surprise and anguish.

"There, I've killed him!" she cried remorsefully. "Oh, why did you give it to me, Miss Pat?"

Patricia giggled. "He isn't hurt," she reassured her. "See, he's laughing and throwing it back at you. Lucky you didn't threw it harder, though, since you're such a stunning marksman. I was going to give it to David, but I'm glad I didn't. He might have knocked out both eyes."

Judith, diverted by the escape that this picture suggested, recovered her spirits sufficiently to wave hilariously in reply, so that, as Patricia had hoped, Elinor's last view of the little family group on the portico steps was a comfortingly cheerful one, even Hannah Ann adding to its gayety by hurling a dilapidated arctic into the syringa bush by the drive.

"I didn't make free to throw it after them," she explained to Miss Jinny, as the car sped out of sight and they slowly turned to the house. "I jest sort of indicated my feelin' by chuckin' it in their direction."

Patricia heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction.

"Now there isn't a single lazy minute left for us after tonight," she said. "We'll have to simply slave to get everything ready on time. So let's give up tonight to doing nothing. Let's have a fire in the library after everybody's gone—it's cool enough when the sun goes down—and have a spread on the hearth rug, and talk it all over while we remember every tiny scrap of it. What do you all say?"

"Will you let me stay up tonight late, Miss Pat?" inquired Judith rather anxiously. "I think I ought to hear everything about Elinor's wedding, and I'd miss lots if I went to bed at nine."

David chuckled. "Tom and Margaret and I have to get out for that seven o'clock train in the morning, so you won't catch us

up too late," he declared, and Judith brightened.

"You poor things—you're all awfully tired!" she said compassionately. "I think you all ought to go to bed very early tonight. Don't you, Patricia?"

Patricia laughed.

"We'll all turn in with the chickens tonight, so as to be ready to pitch in tomorrow," she declared. "We won't have a long evening, so we may as well begin now. Come along, all of you, to the library. Forward, MARCH!"

CHAPTER IV

EN VOYAGE

"WHAT a funny smell," said Judith, elevating her nose and sniffing delicately. "It isn't like anything I ever smelled before."

"What did you expect?" laughed Patricia, throwing her bag on the narrow sofa that ran along one side of their stateroom. "A ship ought to smell different from a house or garden. I love it! It reminds me of the Arabian Nights and Robinson Crusoe and Treasure Island all rolled in one. Isn't this the cutest room you ever saw—with such lovely shiny curtain rings to the berths and pretty electric lights? I didn't imagine we'd have such a nice one, did you?"

Judith calmly adjusted her soft gray hat over her straight blonde mane before she answered, but her voice was thrilling with suppressed excitement and her cheeks and eyes were brilliant.

"Bruce told us it would be comfortable," she said with a sweep of her long lashes. "And when he says that, you know, he generally means it'll be—*scrumptious!*"

"Talking about my new bonnet?" called a brisk voice as the door was pushed open to admit a beaming face with rather prominent pale blue eyes, surmounted by a smart sea-going toque pulled close about the scant curling drab hair. "You can admire it just as well up-stairs, and Mr. Spicer says we oughtn't to miss seeing the last of the harbor. Don't stop to prink. You can do that later. Come along or you'll miss it."

Judith sprang to follow as the head disappeared, and Patricia called gayly from the mirror where she was tucking up some windblown curls.

"All right, *Mrs. Spicer.* I'll be along in a jiffy!"

She heard the husky chuckle that was so pleasantly familiar, and her heart warmed at the sound.

"Dear Miss Jinny," she thought tenderly. "How good and kind she is. And how sensible, too. She isn't a bit like the

old maids one reads about—silly, sentimental old things! She's just the same as she ever was. But no power on earth can make me think of her as Mrs. Spicer. I wonder if she'd mind if I kept on calling her just plain 'Miss Jinny'?"

She put the question to her as she joined the little group at the rail, where they were clustered to watch the jagged sky-line of the great city dwindle and shrink as they sped down the bay.

"Of course I don't mind, child," said Mrs. Spicer with a chuckle. "I don't believe I'll ever get used to the new one, anyway. I didn't know who the deck steward was talking about when he asked where Mrs. Spicer wanted her chair put. If Mr. Spicer hadn't nudged me, I'd have never thought he meant me."

"*I* shall call you by your new name," said Judith, with a friendly smile at Mr. Spicer. "I like it and I think it sounds very nice and comfortable. Somehow 'Miss' always has a sort of lonely sound to me, after one's really grown up."

The others laughed, but Patricia groaned.

"You'll be the death of me yet, Infant," she said despairingly. "Your matrimonial inclinations are so unquenchable. You've been planning the very cut of your future husband's chin ever since you've been knee-high to a grasshopper. If you don't look out, you'll be an old maid after all. It's the unexpected that always happens, you know."

Judith tossed her head with a little childish laugh. "I'm not worrying, Miss Pat," she said, loftily. "I have two picked out, and if one doesn't suit, the other is bound to. I won't be apt to be a single spinster, rest assured."

"You might be a good bit worse," said Patricia rather hotly. "If there weren't any single spinsters, as you call them, the world would be a mighty different sort of place. Nobody thinks how many corners they fill or how many rough spots they smooth over——"

Mrs. Spicer's deep chuckle halted her defense, and she blushed and laughed a little as her friend said soothingly:

"Never you mind, Miss Pat. Folks are

always bound to have their opinions, and the old maid's got to stand being joked about, same as the mothers-in-law and the fat people. Look at that sky and water! Ain't it the prettiest you ever saw? Looks like sunset, almost, doesn't it?"

The day was a very beautiful one, and as the liner swam slowly down the bay, the noon sunlight in the distance had the warm glow of sunset, and New York's notched and angular outline stretched away in a rosy haze, with two or three tiny puffs of tinted cloud lying above the highest buildings. Liberty flung up her torch black against the glow of sky and sea, and the wide breast of the water was alive with hurrying boats.

"It certainly is a magnificent harbor," said Mr. Spicer warmly. "You'll learn to appreciate it more when you've been about the world a bit."

"I hope it's as fair a day when we come back. I want to see the first low streak of land grow into the bright hills and city like they are today," said Patricia, her heart fluttering with the thought that this harbor, this city, these dim hills on the receding

shore were hers, because they were her country.

Perhaps the same thought was in all of their minds, for Judith voiced the same feeling, holding her small, well-shaped head high.

"I'm glad I'm a United Statistician, instead of a Turk or African," she said in her clear, penetrating tones.

A hearty laugh burst involuntarily from two passengers near them at the rail, but was checked immediately at the mortified expression that sprang to Judith's sensitive face.

"I beg your pardon, I am sure," said the younger man to Mr. Spicer, with a pleasant air of courteous deference. "I hope you won't be offended by our laughter, for our sentiments are precisely those just expressed by the young lady—only we haven't voiced them so clearly."

Judith, much mollified by being called a young lady, and also by the dignified speech of the younger, and the distinguished appearance of the elder man, recovered her usual calm manner and was able to smile

in a distant, formal way when, on Mr. Spicer's assurances that patriotism was always pardonable, the elder of the two added in an agreeable voice:

"It has the more point for us, since we are, in fact, statisticians, going over for data on sociological problems, and are most entirely united both as to our methods and interests."

"There's your chance to gather up a lot of long words, Judy," whispered Patricia, aside, while Mr. Spicer exchanged a few words with the two men. "You ought to get enough on this trip to last you all summer—that is, if you're not seasick and have to spend your time in your bunk instead of harvesting polysyllables."

Judith opened her eyes and was about to remark on Patricia's own performance in that line when Mr. Spicer turned to them with an air of gratification.

"My dear," he said to his wife, whose whole attention had been claimed by the passing pageant of the changing shores on either side, "these gentlemen are from the Chicago University and they know Olin

Stromson and his family very well. Let me introduce Mr. Henry Landis and his nephew Mr. Randolph Landis. My wife, Mr. Landis, and this young lady who has made us acquainted is Miss Judith Kendall, one of Bruce Haydon's new sisters-in-law (they know Bruce, too, my dear), and this is Miss Patricia Kendall, her sister."

Patricia thought she had never seen kinder eyes than Mr. Henry Landis', and she liked the erect, graceful way he held himself. "I'm going to like you ever so much," she said to herself as she bowed. "I hope you have the sort of statistics that will help one understand Europe, for I'm sure you'd be awfully kind and patient."

The younger man, with his smoothly waving fair hair and careful manner, was more of a problem, and she expressed her opinion to Miss Jinny after the two gentlemen had moved away and Mr. Spicer with Judith had gone off to see if the deck chairs the steward had promised were properly tagged and in place.

"I'm glad they know a lot," she said happily, "for we can't always be bothering

Mr. Spicer on his wedding trip, and it will be nice to pump them—that is, if they'll let us. I like Mr. H. Landis immensely already, but I'm not so sure about the other. He looks as though he might be rather top-lofty. He'll suit Ju to a T though, won't he? I shouldn't wonder if she annexed him at once, with an eye to the future, you know."

Mrs. Spicer chuckled comfortably.

"Judith mostly has pretty good taste," was all she said on the subject, and when Mr. Spicer and Judith joined them a few minutes later the matter of deck chairs and places at the table absorbed them all.

The pilot left them at Sandy Hook, and Patricia scrambled to send a postal with the picture of the boat on it to Miriam Halden and barely missed getting it in the mail bag. Then they turned their attention to "in-doors," as Mrs. Spicer persistently called it, much to her husband's amusement.

"I'll never learn to call these stairways 'companionways'—never in the world!" she declared vigorously. "I don't see much sense in the name anyway, unless it means that you ought to have a companion to prop

you up when the ship's rolling, as it's starting in to do now. My gracious, that was a tilty one! I don't see why we're beginning to hump about that way when we aren't out of sight of land yet."

"Some of the people are beginning to feel shaky already," volunteered Judith sedately, as she walked composedly beside the tottering Mrs. Spicer. "I heard that very fancy-looking young lady ask the deck steward to take her down before we got past Quarantine."

"It's rather rough, for a fact," said Mr. Spicer calmly. "But you'll soon get used to it, my dear. I am sure you're all going to be good sailors and enjoy every minute of it."

He left them at their own doors and turned toward the door with a barber sign.

"I shouldn't wonder if mama turned out to be the best of all," said Mrs. Spicer, turning the handle of the stateroom which Mrs. Shelly had all to herself and where she sat smiling contentedly at them over her new lace front which she had put on for the first dinner on shipboard.

Judith flew to her and kissed her rapturously.

"Didn't you feel lonely?" she asked in her ear. "Were we gone long?"

Mrs. Shelly shook her head till her little curls flew about her temples.

"I was enjoying myself," she declared. "I saw such a lot when we first came on, I just wanted to sit down and think it over, so I wouldn't forget it soon."

Her daughter smiled at her and tucked up the stray tendrils with a loving hand.

"It's a mighty good thing to do, too," she declared brightly. "Most of us don't take enough time to let things soak in, and that is why we can't remember much. We got a sort of mental indigestion, I guess, because we haven't strength of mind to stop looking."

Patricia flung the pink-cheeked little lady a kiss as she smiled at her from the doorway.

"Isn't she the sweetest thing!" she exclaimed fervently. "Instead of moping because she can't keep up with us, she makes us all happy by actually *enjoying*

herself cooped up in a stuffy stateroom! I was so afraid she wouldn't have a good time traveling, but I'm positive she's going to be a perfect *treasure.*"

"Of course she is," said Judith calmly. "She always is. And I think she's quite right about seeing too much at once. I'm going to take a nap till dinner time. You may rush about in your usual distracted fashion, Patricia, but I am going to take an hour to rest and think."

Patricia groaned again. "Suit yourself," she replied, "but don't ask me to browse in a bunk while so many new and fascinating things are going on. I'm crazy to slip into my other dress and explore. I'm wild to see the dining-room and the people we're to sit with, and what the captain looks like; aren't you, Miss Jinny?"

"I'm afraid I am," confessed Miss Jinny regretfully. "Though it does seem that I ought to be able to wait, like mama and Judy here. I believe I'll join you, Miss Pat, if you're going up-stairs again. I can get into my duds in ten minutes and I'll drop in on the way up."

Patricia rushed through her dressing pell-mell, not minding in the least Judith's admonitions.

"Don't you fret about my hair being mussed and my face red, Ju duckie," she said as she flung on her long cape. "This scarf will keep my hair like a new pin, and no one will care how I look anyway. I'm not going to miss the hour outside in this glorious air. It's getting fresher all the time, and it may be raining later on, and I'd simply die if I didn't see all there was to be seen right away."

Judith sighed resignedly as she curled up on the sofa and opened her resplendent new black morocco journal with the words in gilt conspicuous across its front, "My Trip Abroad," and deliberately unscrewed her fountain pen.

"Very well," she returned rather absently. "I guess you'd better be mussed than *deceased.* I'll come up with Mrs. Shelly when dinner's ready."

Patricia swooped upon her with a joyous hug. "I'll tell you all about it tonight," she promised and then flew off to meet Mrs.

Spicer, whom she heard closing the door of her room opposite.

Patricia knew that her own feelings were duplicated in her beloved Miss Jinny's breast, and beyond a brief comment now and again, they wasted few words, so intent were they on taking in every minute detail of life on shipboard.

They prowled about the promenade decks, inspected the cozy corners by the funnels, tested their deck chairs and abandoned them almost at once as too stationary a point of view; they made friends with some of the few children on board, bowed to the two Landis men, whom they almost tumbled into as they mistakenly tried to investigate the smoking-room under the delusion that it was another Ladies' Lounge. And the hour sped so swiftly that the second dinner call had sounded musically before they realized that the dining salon was open to their eager inspection, and saw Mr. Spicer carefully steering Mrs. Shelly up the companionway, with Judith in their wake.

They hurriedly tossed their wraps into a corner of the ladies' lounge and joined

the others just as they entered the big low-raftered salon.

The long rows of spotless, carefully arranged tables, the murmur of voices, the lights, the stewards in their uniforms moving deftly about or standing expectantly behind the revolving chairs, made a delightful scene to Patricia's unaccustomed eyes, and the deference of her particular steward as he seated her in the twirling chair and presented her serviette and ménu, sent her blood galloping gayly through her veins and a flood of rosy color to her cheeks while twin lights danced in her big gray eyes.

She was so eager to see everything at once and the ménu was so full of new dishes that she did not grasp at first the honor which had been done them in placing their little party at the Captain's table, with Mr. Spicer at the left of the empty seat at the head of the long board.

Judith called her attention to it in an undertone while she was still struggling to understand the second part of the bill of fare, against the steward's return, and

she looked up with quick disappointment at the empty seat where the Captain should have been.

"I hope he isn't going to stay away on our account," she said with a swift change to mirth. "Perhaps Mr. H. Landis has told him already what big words you use, Ju, and he's shy about meeting you."

Judith, shocked at such flippany about the autocrat of the boat, explained laboriously that Mr. Landis had merely got the purser to put them where they now were, and that he hadn't seen the Captain for more than a minute, that official being too busy to bother with anything.

"Well, I'm glad we're here, at all events," said Patricia, lapsing into grateful appreciation, as she noted the line of faces opposite. "I think we'll like most of the people at this end of the table, and even if we didn't, it will sound so nice to say that we were at the captain's table. It would pay for even being rather dull."

According to Mr. Spicer's expert advice, Patricia ate sparingly of her first dinner on the ocean, and so had the more time

to observe her associates at the board; and on the whole she found them very interesting. The two Landises were opposite Mr. and Mrs. Spicer and then came two girls with rather intelligent faces and obvious experience of ship life; next to them and across from Patricia was a family of three, gray-haired father and slender mother, with a tall, dark-haired son. Altogether the prospect was satisfactory, and Patricia's only grievance of being three seats away from her particular friend and chum, Miss Jinny, was almost compensated by the fact that the chair at her left was occupied by a portly, swarthy, middle-aged South American with a flock of pretty chattering daughters with whom Patricia looked to become better acquainted at no very late date.

"I know I'm going to like the Ballingtons," she said to Miss Jinny, who was saying good-night to the two girls after an evening spent on deck under the tender light of the young moon. "They talked so pleasantly to each other at dinner. And those parrakeets from Lima are perfectly fascinating."

Judith was already in the upper berth, with the curtains pushed back to their widest, enjoying the talk that had been rattling on for the last half hour; but now she sat up, with her brows puckered into a protesting curve.

"Oh, please don't get in the habit of calling them names, Miss Pat," she besought earnestly. "You might forget and do it where one of them heard you, and they say South Americans are *so* hot-tempered. You don't know what might happen to you!"

Patricia laughed good-naturedly as she turned for the final good-night at the door.

"You won't tell on me, will you, Miss Jinny? Or shall we try to have them searched for deadly weapons before we scratch up an intimacy with them?"

Miss Jinny patted her shoulder affectionately.

"I reckon we can trust Miss Pat not to hurt any one's feelings with hard names, Judy dear," she said kindly. "I predict that she'll have a better time than any of

us on this trip, and that we needn't worry about her offending folks or getting into trouble. Now, you two get in bed and to sleep double-quick, for it's after eleven, and scandalously late for tired people."

The door closed firmly and Patricia slipped the lock.

"All the same," she said gayly to the anxious Judith, "I'm going to get in touch with the parrakeets and the other two girls across the table, just as soon as I can. I'll talk to them about breakfast foods, if I don't find any other way. I can't waste time shilly-shallying about when we've only ten days to know one another in."

"Ten days is a long time on shipboard," said the much-read Judith wisely. "Suppose you were on a fast boat."

"Well, I'm not" returned Patricia snapping off the light and making a spring for her berth. "And I haven't any room in my brain for 'supposes.' I'm thinking about breakfast time, and what will happen then."

CHAPTER V

THE MAN IN THE STEERAGE

BREAKFAST was not nearly so full of opportunities for making friends as Patricia had hoped.

The pretty South Americans were not to be seen, and the more attractive of the other two girls left almost as soon as she had seated herself, while the dark, quiet one ate a hurried breakfast, vouchsafing only the most necessary interest in the other passengers, and followed her friend as soon as possible. It was evident that the pretty one was not a good sailor and that her companion was used to ministering to her.

The Ballingtons had not arrived and the Landises had already gone. Mr. Spicer, after seating Mrs. Shelly beside Judith, had gone out to make his wife comfortable on deck, where the increased rolling of the boat had driven her to breakfast in her

deck chair; so that the table was but scantily occupied, and there was little fun, according to Patricia's mind, in lingering over her *tête-à-tête* with Judith after Mrs. Shelly had finished her dainty bit and trotted off on her new son in-law's arm to superintend the breakfast tray on deck.

"Let's go see Miss Jinny, and then perhaps Mr. Spicer will take us about with him a bit. He can go anywhere he wants—almost."

Judith laid down her napkin at once.

"All right," she responded readily. "But I do wish you wouldn't call her 'Miss Jinny,' Miss Pat. It doesn't sound right, now that she's married. I shouldn't think Mr. Spicer would like it."

Patricia's brow wrinkled and then cleared.

"I tell you what I'll call her, Judy," she said, steering a safe course between the rows of chairs on their way to the entrance. "I'll re-name her *Mrs.* Jinny—that will be respectful enough, won't it? I'm going to call Mr. Spicer 'Uncle Nat'—I know he'll like it, and so will Mrs. Jinny. We're going to be with him a lot, and there's no use being so stiff."

They found the little party comfortably grouped in a nook apart from the other passengers, each cozily ensconced in a deck chair. Mrs. Jinny, as Patricia promptly hailed her, was looking the picture of health and happiness, with her pale eyes snapping and her scanty tendrils blowing in the crisp morning air, and her deep husky chuckle very much in evidence. The breakfast tray, which a smiling steward was removing, had a particularly ravaged appearance.

"Why, I thought you were ill!" exclaimed Judith in surprise. "You look terribly well! And you've had a lot of breakfast, too!"

Mrs. Jinny chuckled. "That breakfast is what set me up, duckie—that and the good air. I *was* feeling rather pale about the gills when I first came up, so the commandant there," nodding towards her husband, "advised getting on deck and staying there till I got rid of that wobbly feeling. You'll have to run about by yourselves for a while, I'm afraid. I don't want to risk getting bowled over if I can help it."

Patricia patted her hand. "That's right," she said heartily. "You and Mama Shelly will take a good rest—dear knows you need it after all the rush—and Uncle Nat will show us things."

There was a ripple of approval at this appropriation of Mr. Spicer, and much to Judith's relief the gentleman himself seemed quite as pleased as his wife.

"What sort of things?" he asked with a twinkle. "Sounds as though you wanted me to become a prestidigitator and pull rabbits out of 'Mrs. Jinny's' blue silk cap."

"We want to see everything that is open to the inquiring public," replied Patricia, smiling engagingly at him. "And we know you can do it, since you are a person of influence. I heard enough from the talk with Mr. H. Landis last night to know you are, so please don't deny it. What shall you show us first, Uncle Nat?"

He drew his length out of his chair with a shake of his clever, grizzled head.

"I see where my captivity begins," he remarked dryly, with a sidelong glance of amusement at his wife. "I suppose by the

time we get to Bishop Rock I won't dare say my soul is my own."

Judith cast a reproachful look at her sister.

"Don't mind Patricia, please, Mr. Spicer," she said gently. "We really aren't going to be a bother to you."

Mr. Spicer opened his eyes quite wide at her earnestness, pretending at the same time to be much hurt.

"This young lady repudiates any relationship with your new husband, Jinny, my dear," he said sadly. "I see that I have gotten only one niece by this marriage. I fear Elinor may insist on giving me all my geological and meteorological titles, and as for Bruce Haydon, I tremble to think of what he may not call me."

Judith flushed at the laughter in his eyes, and as usual in her little difficulties, turned to Mrs. Shelly, who had been quietly smiling on them all, though she could only catch a word or two of the talk.

Judith stooped over her. "I'm going to call Mr. Spicer *Uncle*," she said in a low, clear tone. "I've never had an uncle

before and it's sort of hard to start in, but—I'm going to do it," she ended determinedly with a toss of her blonde head, and going to Mr. Spicer she held out her small hand.

"I hope, dear Uncle Nathaniel, that you will take me for a niece, too," she said, with her air of formal dignity. "I will try to be very good and not bother."

Mr. Spicer grasped her offered hand heartily. "Bless your heart, Judy dear," he returned, smiling down on her. "You don't need to ask—just call me Uncle Nat and we'll call it square. Now, where do you young ladies want to explore?"

Patricia answered swiftly: "I heard the Landises say they were going down to see the engine-room—couldn't we go, too? I'd love to dive down into the 'underground' of the ship right away."

Mr. Spicer agreed, and they hurried off to their staterooms to slip on dark blouses, and returning, met him at the companionway.

Patricia was surprised at the multitude of rooms and passages, storehouses and offices that they passed on their way to the

narrow, slippery iron staircase that wound its heated way to the level of the engine-room, but she had no time for comment, all her attention being needed to guide her feet safely in the semi-twilight of the passages.

At the top of the engine-room stair she paused, with a little gasp of dismay, her eyes riveted on the extreme openwork stair with its equally open platforms interspersed at intervals.

"Four flights of those giddy things!" she exclaimed regretfully. "I don't believe I can go down, Uncle Nat. I'm such a goose about climbing ladders."

Mr. Spicer, already on the first platform with Judith, was about to reassure her, when one of the assistant engineers, looking up, saw her plight and, at a nod from his chief, ran lightly up with wads of cotton waste in his blackened hands, and after giving Mr. Spicer and Judith each a bunch, came up to where Patricia was hesitating.

"If you will take this, please, and hold on to the rail with one hand I will guide you

down," he said, respectfully offering a grimy hand.

Patricia clung thankfully to the strong, steady hand, while she grasped the hot, oily rail firmly with the wad of cotton waste, and so came to the floor triumphantly, with the giddiness gone and her whole attention fixed on the throbbing monsters that so smoothly and irresistibly fulfilled their various functions.

It was hard to make oneself heard above the panting of the oily leviathans, but with Patricia speech was a safety valve, and she shrieked her remarks and inquiries into her newly adopted uncle's patient ear with the most satisfying results. He explained to her the action of the numberless registers, and gauges and condensers, and told her how every four hours at the change of forces, the record of the revolution of the shaft is taken and placed on the blackboard near the entrance of the engine-room and at the end of the day this record is entered in about three different logs, ending with the comprehensive ship's log.

Patricia sighed over the labor of this

department, but when they stepped from the oily orderliness of the engine-room into the compartment where the boilers are kept, she fairly groaned at the frantic work that was going on there.

"What a mysterious, gloomy, tragic place," she said to Mr. Spicer, as her eyes grew accustomed to the dimness of the place. "Those tremendous, towering, dusky bulks—are they the fire-boxes? And do the stokers have to work so furiously *all* the time? How *can* they keep it up! Even if they are on duty only four hours, I don't see how they can shovel like mad all that time."

"Oh, see! They are pulling out a fire!" exclaimed Judith, with breathless interest.

It was a picture worth seeing. In a flare of warm-colored light, against a background of dense shadow, the half-stripped figures of the stokers, dripping with sweat and blackened with grime, toiled furiously, flinging out with a long rake the masses of red-hot glowing coals, playing a white stream of hissing water on the molten mass of clinkers till clouds of steam rose far

among the looming bulk of the fire-boxes, raking the sodden débris swiftly into the gloom, and starting new fires in the emptied grates.

"They use bituminous coal mixed with some sort of tar, and that makes a hotter fire than the plain coal," explained Mr. Spicer as they gasped with the heat.

"I thought it was hotter than anything I ever felt," said Judith, deeply interested in the statistical department. "I suppose they use a terrible lot. Doesn't the engine ever burst with such dreadful heat?"

"Mr. Swain, the chief, tells me that the engine never bursts; it is the pipes or valves that give way," answered Mr. Spicer as they left the dramatic picture of toil and went again into the engine-room. "Hello, there's Landis just going into the screw room. We'll catch him there and perhaps he can tell you all you want to know, Judy. I'm not very well up on this sort of thing."

Patricia paused on the step of the low, long, cool, iron-walled room where one of the shafts was twirling in its long narrow

platform table, very much at leisure and fed by unstinted oil reservoirs, which dripped continually on the smooth, shining cylinder of steel that looked so calm and so unhurried.

"Why, it's like a green-house, isn't it?" she exclaimed. "The table is just like those flat tables in green-houses, and the wooden floor reminds one of it, too. I understand now why they talk so respectfully of the screws—they are the aristocrats of the boat, and they lie twirling in elegant leisure while the poor engines pant and puff and toil for them."

Judith was already deep in talk with Mr. Landis, and they had gone to the far end of the low-roofed room. Judith had her head against the wall and was evidently listening for something. Suddenly she turned with shining eyes and beckoned Patricia and Mr. Spicer.

"Listen," she commanded, pushing Patricia's ear in position. "What do you hear?"

"Principally your chatter—" began Patricia gayly, when her ear, pressed close against the white iron wall, caught a

tremendous low-toned reiterated roar that thundered dimly at some unknown distance. Her face sobered and her heart beat fast at the hungry sound of it. She knew it was the sea pounding in their wake, and with that roar of power in her ear, she felt the full might of the vast ocean that she had looked down upon from the deck with so little concern.

"Horrors, how near it sounds!" she said with a shiver. "Let's get up-stairs where we can be on top of it. I don't like this being down under water when it's so rough."

The others laughed, and Judith, with her most superior air, said, patronizingly, "There is eleven feet of steel or wood or something between you and the water, Patricia, and you aren't a bit safer on deck than you are here—you know that perfectly well."

"I know it, *in my mind*, but my poor benighted body feels a lot better when it's looking down on these big brutes of waves that are tearing at the propellers," retorted Patricia gayly. "I'm such a shallow, forgetful critter that when I'm out in the

air and sun, I'll not stop to think of all that's going on under water, and I'll feel perfectly safe and happy till the ship actually goes down."

Mr. Landis had listened with a smile, and understood apparently that Patricia's timidity was not to be taken seriously; nevertheless he made the motion to lead the little party to that upper region which had been so warmly spoken of.

"The Captain is going his rounds in about five minutes," he said, looking at his watch. "If you would like to see the steerage I'll go on ahead and ask him if you may join us."

The girls gave eager assent, and Mr. Spicer being entirely willing to devote more of his morning to his new nieces, they followed him through the low door of the shaft-room, and after a few words of thanks to the chief engineer and his assistants, they climbed the airy iron stair, and after a hasty cleansing in their rooms hurried to join the official group that was moving through the narrow corridor at the end of the stateroom section.

Mr. Landis met them and, as the Captain finished his task of inspection of the last stateroom, he led them up to be introduced.

The Captain, a large rough-hewn viking of heroic build, welcomed them with gruff graciousness and then stalked on ahead with the attendant officers, leaving them to follow in a more leisurely fashion.

Patricia never remembered clearly just where it was in the steerage that she saw the strange, Turkish-looking man with the wounded wrist. It was not in the clean commodious hospitals for the men or women; for she recalled afterward that the Captain had sent him to the deft nurses with a sharp reprimand. Nor was it in the men's portion, with its tiny two-bunked staterooms that she first noticed him—nor on the steerage deck with its brooding, stupid huddles of men and women and gay, dancing children and gesticulating boys. She always saw him in her mind, when months after the secret of the "good luck" knife was discovered, sitting apart from a group of chattering Italians, with a great blue cloak about him and his sharp, hawk-

like face sunken on his breast. He had not stirred at the passing of the inspecting party, yet Patricia noticed as she paused a little behind the others to try to catch a few familiar words in the chatter of the southerners, that he flashed a swift glance first at the backs of the inspectors and then at her and she felt irresistibly drawn to speak to him.

"Good morning," she said with a smile. "I hope you are well." She felt quite idiotic, as she said afterward, for there really was no reason at all that she should have accosted him.

The man turned his deep, brilliant eyes full on her for a moment and then he slowly drew the cloak aside to show a clumsily bound wrist, with the bandages slipping loose.

"You will help?" he asked in a low, hurried voice, and, with the cloak still shielding his wrist from sight, motioned her to tie the rags in place.

Patricia felt unaccountably impressed with a necessity for silence and secrecy, and she merely nodded as she stooped and

swiftly wound the dark linen into a smooth cuff-like bandage, such as she noticed on his other arm.

"Shall I do the other, too?" she questioned in an undertone, but he shook his head impatiently and thrust the wounded arm under the blue cloak again, and with another searching glance all about him, motioned to her to bend nearer.

"You verree kind," he said in a penetrating whisper, and with his fierce eyes fixed on hers. "I give you gif.' You say notting to peoples," and he cast a look at the retreating party. "I no like hospit'. I give you these."

He drew a slender package from his wrap and thrust it into her hand with a fierce, peremptory gesture.

"Oh, but I didn't do anything—" began Patricia in protest against such liberal payment for so small a service. "I can't take it, really."

Instantly his manner changed to an incredible softness. His mournful eyes grew moist.

"Ah, it is because you are so like my

child," he said brokenly. "I give gif' for her who is dead. Take it, and *do not show*."

Patricia melted, and as at this precise moment Mr. Spicer missed her and turned to beckon, she thrust the package into the pocket of her outing skirt, and with a nod and a finger touched to her lips to promise secrecy, she hurried to join the distant group, feeling very mysterious and important.

"Who were you chumming up with among those swine?" asked the younger Mr. Landis, who had joined the party unseen by Patricia, and who had been the one to call her guardian's notice to her absence. "It doesn't do to be too sympathetic, you know. They'll impose on you every time."

"I wasn't chumming up with anyone. I was only talking to a man with a sore wrist," replied Patricia coolly, feeling that she could easily learn to hate Mr. Randolph Landis and his high and mighty ways of interfering with people with whom he had no concern.

"Hospital's the place for him. He's

only playing off, I'll be bound," said this very obnoxious young man, with an indifference that was most provoking.

Patricia wished he would question her about the matter—she would show him that she could be quite as self-contained as any older and more experienced person. She had been on the brink of going straight to Mrs. Jinny and telling the little incident with as many flourishes as possible, but now she determined to keep the matter a secret as the ferocious, melancholy creature in the steerage had seemed to wish.

"I won't even show it to Ju," she thought, as she went with the others through the rest of the routine inspection. "I'll wait till I am with Elinor and Bruce and then some evening when it is dark and rainy and we're all sitting about the fire, I'll tell the story of a Turk's gratitude—if he is a Turk. But I'm dying to see what's in the package. It feels dreadfully hard."

CHAPTER VI

THE SPELL BEGINS TO WORK

PATRICIA had no chance to examine her secret parcel till long after sandwich-and-bouillon time, for when inspection was over and a vivid description of the underworld of the ship had been given to Mrs. Jinny, and a chat with the dark-haired girl had made her acquainted with one more of the coterie of the Captain's table, Patricia found herself engaged to have a game of shuffleboard with Mr. Randolph Landis and two of the pretty South Americans, who had come forth radiant and charming from their retreat and were ready to be as friendly and gay as could be wished.

Patricia would have had what she called "a frightfully good time" if she and the Pretty Parrakeets, as she still insisted on naming them in private with Judith, could have had their game by themselves, but

the presence of Randolph Landis spoiled her fun, and with the consciousness of the mysterious gift burning at the back of her mind, she played so badly that the game was given up until she could have practiced a little and grown more proficient.

"We will try again this afternoon," promised Leonore, the eldest of the two girls, as they parted at the companionway. "I will show you how it is done, and then we will play Aimée and that stiff Mr. Landis again. They will not get off so easily next time—you shall see!"

Patricia hurried to her room with burning cheeks and dancing spirits. Life on shipboard was certainly proving full enough of interest to satisfy even her eager mind.

"I'll take a peep and then I'll lock it up in my suitcase until I can put it in my trunk," she said breathlessly, securing the door behind her.

She fished the package out of her deep pocket and paused for a tense moment, listening for possible footsteps outside.

"I fell like a villain in a play—hiding

about like this," she laughed to herself. "But I'm not going to let it get to Mr. Prim's ears that the poor soul gave me a present just because I was like his dead daughter. He'd say it was—well, something dreadful, no doubt, and that forlorn man would have to go through all sorts of questioning. It was horrid of him to have him sent to the hospital when he hated so to go. I shouldn't have told him a word if I'd dreamed he'd go blab to the Captain. What if he did tie up his two wrists alike and slip in without notice? Plenty of people hate to have nurses and doctors doddering around them."

She had been unrolling the soft paper while her mind ran on, and as the last wrapper fell away, she gave a start of surprise.

"Why," she exclaimed in astonishment. "Why, it's a dagger!"

It took but a moment for the quick revulsion at so unfeminine a possession to fade, as she saw the beauty of the jeweled hilt and the delicacy of the engraved blade.

"What a perfect beauty!" she whispered,

running appreciative fingers over the richly studded hilt. "He oughtn't to have given it to me. I'll take it back right away," and she started up to carry out her words when her eyes fell on a piece of paper which had fallen on the floor at her feet.

Stooping, she picked it up and read in printed letters that left no clue to the writer's identity: "This poor imitation will bring good luck to the owner if he hides it in his bosom secretly and shows no man. Revealed to others, it will be an instrument of evil fortune."

Patricia gave a gasp of relief.

"Then it's only imitation, after all," she said, her eyes beginning to dance again. "And I can keep it. It's come to me, just like it might happen in the Arabian Nights or——"

A sound in the passageway made her jump.

"There's Judy, sure as fate," she thought, scrambling for the papers and thrusting them, with the dagger, into the inner pocket of her suitcase with one hand while

she clicked the fastening of the door with the other.

"It's lunch time, Miss Pat," said Judith, unconscious of any perturbation on her sister's part. "Mrs. Jinny is going in and the Captain's already there. Do come along."

Patricia meekly responded and followed Judith to the dining salon with a swelling sense of delightful importance. The luck that was to come to her was uppermost in her mind as she seated herself in her place, and it did not surprise her in the least to learn that she was to be included with the Landises and Spicers in the invitation to drink coffee with the Captain in his quarters "up-stairs" (as Mrs. Jinny persisted in calling the bridge and Captain's rooms) that afternoon at four.

Judith nudged her as dessert was being put on.

"What's the matter with you, Miss Pat?" she asked in an undertone. "You look awfully top-lofty. Has anything happened?"

Patricia longed to tell her of the magic

dagger, but she did not. How much was due to caution and how much to the certainty that Judith would scoff at the possibility of a mere piece of metal and mineral having power to bring good fortune, she did not confess to herself, merely remarking aloud to Judith that she hoped the sun would stay in till their shuffleboard games were over, as it was so much pleasanter to play in the shade.

Judith, though ignored, was not entirely put off the track, and when, after an enlivening hour at the game, Patricia went down to freshen up for the coffee drinking, she made another comment.

"Did that man really say anything to you, Patricia dear?" she asked in a wheedling tone.

Patricia started. "Why in the world do you ask such silly questions, Judith Kendall?" she said severely, with a very guilty feeling in her heart at the deception she was employing. It was her first real secret and she was not enjoying it quite so much now as she had at first.

Judith shrugged her slim shoulders.

"Oh, nothing much," she replied evasively. "But you seemed so excited ever since, and you aren't thinking about what's going on—very much. You didn't answer Aimée LeGrande when she spoke twice to you."

Patricia hesitated a moment and laughed lightly. "Your detective instincts are quite remarkable, Ju, but if I were you I'd keep them for someone else besides my own family. It seems sort of cold blooded to analyze your own flesh and blood as you do."

"Well, I guess Elinor doesn't think so badly of me," replied Judith, stung by Patricia's grown-up air. "And you were mighty glad that I could think things out when Doris Leighton sneaked Elinor's prize design at the Academy last spring. You didn't object then, and I don't believe you would now if you weren't up to something."

Patricia faced her with flashing eyes.

"That is quite enough, Judith," she said sharply. "I simply will not stand your foolishness any longer. It is none

of your affairs if I choose to talk or keep quiet—remember that. And I wonder at you suggesting that anything a mere steerage passenger might say could make me 'excited,' as you say."

"Oh, well, don't be cross about it," said Judith so quietly that Patricia felt her own heat ridiculous. "It makes me awfully lonely when you are cross. Elinor is so tremendously far away."

Patricia flung her arms about Judith's thin shoulders and pulled her close. "Don't feel bad, Judy darling," she said, repentant and tender at once. "You know I love you just as much as anyone can." And she kissed her many times.

Judith sighed patiently at first, but soon melted and, forgetting her hurt dignity, kissed Patricia back with great heartiness.

A sharp rap at the door recalled them to the fact that coffee in the Captain's room was not to be kept waiting, and Patricia slipped hastily into her best blouse while Judith hunted out her green jade necklace and pin from the handbag on

the lower berth, with the memory of their recent disagreement entirely gone.

At the foot of the steep stair leading to the bridge Patricia gave Judith's hand a squeeze, and whispered a regret that she was not going along.

"I'm glad I'm not," said Judith sweetly. "I'd ever so much rather stay with Mama Shelly and talk."

So Patricia sped light-hearted up the stair and found the welcome that waited her among the elders very gratifying, and the time spent in listening to the varied experiences of the traveled seniors, very short indeed, while coffee and ice cream and the most delectable little French pastries were served deftly by the Captain's boy.

She had felt a certain timidity in joining the group of guests in the cozy sitting-room, but before half an hour had passed she had forgotten her shyness, and was chatting away as freely as though she were in the library at Greycroft or before the studio fire in Bruce's memorable apartment in town.

Mrs. Jinny talked quietly to Randolph Landis, while Patricia, much to her delight, made one of the little group of four on the other side of the tea-table and had the spirited talk of the three veteran travelers all to herself. Tales of the gold-washing and sheep-shearing days in South America were supplied by the huge Captain, whose experiences in Australia and Madagascar were also sketched in the rough brevity that Patricia found very pleasing.

"You must have traveled enormously," she said to him in an interval when the other two were discussing the politics of Lower Egypt. "How many times have you been across the ocean?"

"The Atlantic, you mean?" he asked indifferently. "This is my hundred and seventy-fifth round trip. It is nothing to some. I know a man who lives in Rotterdam who has made five hundred trips. But he began early. I spent too much time gadding about."

"Oh, but think of all you've seen!" cried Patricia enviously. "How tremen-

dously interesting to have been everywhere and seen everything!"

He looked at her in surprise, lifting his heavy blonde eyebrows. "How do you say?" he asked, puzzled by her enthusiasm. "I do not think you mean that. You are chaffing, is it not? I have seen little. There are yet many countries where I have not been. It is a necessity that I stick to my business till I am somewhat older. Then perhaps I shall go see the world. Ah, yes, it will be pleasant."

He fell into a momentary muse on that free future, and then Mrs. Jinny rose to go, and the spell was broken.

"You must come often," he said with heavy courtesy to them on the threshold. "Tell me if you desire that any friends be also invited, and my boy shall summon them when you wish, and we shall have another good talk. Yes, Miss Patricia, I shall remember you by that most unusual name, and some day soon you shall bring your young friends up to the old gentleman's rooms and have ice cream, if you like."

Patricia shook hands as heartily as though she were not going to be at the same dinner table with him.

"I'd simply *love* to come!" she cried happily. "Couldn't I bring Judith? She'd be crazy over your wonderful tales. She's going to be a writer, you know, and—" She broke off abruptly at the change that came over his face, and then realizing his thought, rippled into a merry laugh. "Oh, she's only a little girl!" she said. "She isn't a reporter or anything terrible like that!"

The viking grinned broadly in relief. "Ah, I am making many mistakes!" he exclaimed. "But bring her, of a certainty. I am not afraid of little girls. I have twenty nieces at home and I know the ways of good little girls. She is good—your sister—not?"

"She's a perfect duck, though she's rather shy at times," replied Patricia, much elated with finding herself on such good terms with the awe-inspiring commander of the boat. "I'll come the very first minute you ask us, and I know some of the girls will be delighted to be asked."

As she ran lightly down after the rest of the party, she smiled happily to herself, humming a gay little tune.

"How well everything is going," she said to herself. "What heavenly luck to be asked up there again."

She caught her breath as the memory of her morning's adventure flashed into her mind.

"It simply *can't* be that it is the good luck from that duck of a dagger," she thought, hesitating over the temptation to believe in its promised power. "I certainly have had a gorgeous time since I got it, but that may be just chance. I'll keep it stowed away a while longer anyway, and see how it works. Then, if it goes on smoothly, I'll show it to Ju and let her keep it a while. If there's anything in it, that will prove just how much can be believed about such things."

CHAPTER VII

ON THE EDGE OF THE OLD WORLD

PATRICIA'S belief in her little jeweled mascot grew as the days slipped delightfully by, each adding some new pleasure to the last; and although she had promised herself that she would test its spell by telling the secret to Judith, she nevertheless delayed, always scoffing secretly at any belief in occult influences, and the like mysteries, yet never bringing herself to the point of revealing her treasure to the practical eyes of her sharp-witted little sister.

Sitting in their stateroom the last night while Judith was saying a lengthy good-night to her adored Mrs. Shelly, she counted up the good times that had come to her most unexpectedly in the last week.

"Hugo Ballington gave me his lovely drawing of the capitol building, and all the rest admired it as much as I did, and

he likes Alice Deering a lot better than he does me," she began, counting off one pink-tipped finger. "And Helen Coulston gave me that green buckle, just because she knew I had a necklace and pin of jade. And the Captain had a little party for Judy and me and let me serve coffee and lemonade. And Mr. Landis taught me a lot about the constitution and government at home, all of his own accord, so I shouldn't be so dull when I get over on the other side. And even Randolph Landis has been terribly pleasant, and said he was sorry he got my man into the hospital—where he didn't have to stay, after all, for his wrist was almost well, anyway."

She forgot her fingers in the memory of the dark-faced man.

"I wonder if I ought to see him and thank him?" she said, puckering her smooth brows in a frown of perplexity. "I've felt somehow that he didn't want me to say any more about it, or I'd have gone down long ago. No, I reckon he's one of those people with such deep feelings they hate any fuss, and he'd be hurt, like as not, if I

said anything more about it. I wonder if I'll ever see him again? I'd know him anywhere, I'm sure. His eyes were so sad and haunting. I suppose he was almost crazy about his poor daughter."

Falling into a revery, she pictured the slim, dark girl with white teeth and gleaming eyes, in whose girdle perhaps the tiny ornate dagger had been worn—the dagger with the power to bless its owner—and she breathed a little more quickly at the thought that the influences that this girl had undoubtedly believed in might, *might* be working for her.

She got out the flashing little knife and looked earnestly at it.

"I certainly *have* had a lot of nice things come to me since I got you," she meditated. "I don't believe people have ever been half so nice to me in all my life."

She slipped it back in its hiding place, half ashamed of her growing conviction of its power. She forgot, in counting her increasing popularity, to trace it to its real source—her own kind and sunny nature radiating more and more the happiness she

felt in this new experience of luxurious ocean travel. The mysterious knife seemed to account for it all, and she snapped the suitcase with an exultant sense of possession.

"I simply can't tell Ju yet," she said aloud, and then started guiltily at the sounds of footsteps at the door. She flung the suitcase under the sofa, hating the secrecy that she had determined on, but not one whit less determined to carry it on until she either had some stroke of unmistakably bad fortune or changed her mind.

She was very sweet to Judith when she came in, as if to make up for withholding something from her, and although Judith had not the least idea of Patricia's remorseful thoughts, her quick response gave Patricia a comfortable sense of rectitude, and by the time she snapped off the light and tumbled into the lower berth she was quite reconciled to her secrecy.

They had passed Bishop Rock Light and the Scilly Isles the day before and were ploughing rapidly along in the Channel;

and when, the next morning, the girls hurried out on deck, the green thread of the white chalk cliffs of the coast dipped to sea level where lay Dover, and the water about them was filled with busy boats, steamers, cruisers, lighters, war vessels, all shining pinkly in the iridescent morning glow.

"Isn't it gorgeous, Ju, to think we'll soon be THERE!" cried Patricia exultantly, as they hurried in to join the others at the breakfast table.

Everyone was more excited than Patricia had thought they could be; the whole air of calm leisure that had pervaded the ship was gone. People were planning eagerly, discarding their original routes in favor of some suggested by newly-made friends; the feeling of community was gone and all were intent on their trunks, their trains or the friends they expected to meet on landing.

"Isn't it funny how different it all is from yesterday?" said Judith to Mr. Spicer as, late in the afternoon, the pilot from Flushing climbed up the steep rope ladder

to the rail. "Nobody cares much about what other people are going to do. We're each so busy with ourselves. I can't think of anything but that I'll see Elinor and Bruce in such a little, little while."

"And I'm thinking of the wonderful things we're going to see that we've never seen before," laughed Mrs. Jinny. "I'm dreadfully glad we'll be with Elinor again, of course, but we aren't going to find her changed, I'm sure of that. But all those cities and people that I've read about all my life—the square in Brussels where they executed Count Egmont, and the old church in Paris that rang out the signal for St. Bartholomew—my, I can't believe I'll really see them with my own eyes!"

"I wonder," said Patricia dreamily, "just what is waiting for us over here. Shall we be as happy as we have been on the way over, or will there be scraggy places, like every-day people at home have? The mere sight of land seems to have changed some of the people so much that I almost wish we weren't so near the landing."

"Tut, tut, likewise fie!" said Hugo Bal-

linger, who with Alice Deering had joined them unnoticed by Patricia. "Don't get scared, Miss Pat. We'll vow to be our sweet, ocean-going selves every moment we're on foreign soil if you'll only brace up and look happy."

"Oh, but we won't see anything of you, or the girls either, for a perfect age," replied Patricia briskly. "We don't intend getting to Paris for the winter's work till late, you know, and the girls will be in Dresden studying away at their music, and it'll be three months at least before we see you again. We're going to stay in Holland all summer, you know, while Bruce and Elinor paint and Judy and I potter about getting awfully well up in Hollowland lore."

"You don't seem particularly grieved about leaving us all so soon," said another low voice, as Aimée LeGrande slipped into the vacant chair beside Mrs. Jinny. "We're perfectly heartbroken that we're not going to stay together, now that we have gotten to be such excellent friends, but she—ah, Mrs. Jeeny, your Miss Pat is not so tender as we of the South. She does not weep

when she says farewell, like Lenore and Fanchon and Mercedes and I have been already doing. We have but one fresh handkerchief left, and there are many hours yet for tears."

"My word! You don't expect me to cry *in public?*" asked Patricia in consternation. "I'm not the crying sort, anyway, Aimée; and you know it's the first time I've been abroad and everything is so gloriously exciting, I don't believe I'd cry if I was leaving my dearest friend—as I am," she added, slipping her hand into Mrs. Jinny's and laughing a fond little apologetic laugh at her old chum.

"Can't see why anyone should cry," said Hugo judicially. "Dad and Materna and me will round most of you up in Paris sooner or later, for we're all going there for some study or other this fall. You girls may fall into each other's arms sooner if the LeGrandes travel in the north, as Mr. LeGrande thinks he may, and as for Miss Deering and Fluffy Ruffles, I hear they're liable to change their plans the moment they land."

Alice Deering shook her head at him. "You promised not to call Ruth that horrid name," she said sharply, and then in another tone to Patricia, she added, "It's really only too true, I'm sorry to say. We always plan and plan while we're on the boat, and we have ideal routes mapped out, but the instant we get our feet on solid ground we simply hate the whole cut-and-dried plan and go off according to our own sweet whim."

"How nice!" exclaimed Judith unexpectedly. "I'd love to do that. I've never traveled, of course, but I know I liked this ocean trip ever so much more because I didn't know till about a week before that we were coming."

"That's the way we're going to do, too," said Mrs. Jinny, smiling at her husband. "As soon as we get these young ones disposed of we're going to amble around just as the spirit moves us, and land knows where we'll end up. Mercy, it's time to get ready for dinner! Come along, children, we must be spry, for it's our last day on this ship and we want to make the most of it."

Dinner that night was the gayest that Patricia had ever known. Everybody seemed to lapse back into what Hugo Ballinger called their ocean-going selves, and all united to have a gloriously good time.

Immediately after, however, most of them hurried to their staterooms for the final packing, for they were to go in on the early tide the next morning and everything must be in readiness.

"Oh, dear," lamented Judith, as she and Patricia had finished packing their suitcases and were sitting curled up on the sofa eating some apples and crackers that the stewardess had brought them. "I wish I hadn't given my tips all at once in the beginning. I won't have a thing to give the stewards tomorrow, and I'll feel like a thief, going off without giving them a cent, when everybody's simply pouring out money on them."

Patricia laughed, but puckered her brow thoughtfully. "You didn't listen to Uncle Nat's instructions, Ju dear," she said gently. "You know he told us the moment we got

on board to give the tips at the end of the trip."

"Well, I didn't hear it anyway," replied Judith dismally, going on with her lunch as though it were veritable Apples of Sodom. "I thought it was best to get all that money safely paid out. So I did it. And it's gone and done with forever."

Patricia pondered. She knew how sensitive Judith was and how she hated to make mistakes in things of this sort, and she very much wanted her little sister's trip to be one of unalloyed pleasure. There had been no cloud on Judith's happiness till now, and she felt immensely sorry that the end should be spoiled for her by a simple misunderstanding on her part.

Patricia thought hard for a moment and then her face lightened.

"I'll tell you what, Ju," she said eagerly, "I've got some money. I'll let you have it, and you can give them just the same tips all around. Won't that make you feel all right?"

Judith's face flushed and her eyes shone with a passionate gratitude, and she flung

out her two little cold hands to catch Patricia's in an ardent clasp.

"Oh, Miss Pat, would you—could you?" she breathed. "I've been *so* ashamed, thinking about it all by myself. It seemed as though I wanted to show off at first and play being so very grand, and then to sneak off without—oh, you're terribly sweet, and—and——"

"Why, Ju!" exclaimed Patricia in surprise. The chill of those nervous little hands struck straight to her warm heart and tears rushed to her eyes. "Why, Ju dearest!"

Judith breathed hard and suddenly sat up wreathed in smiles.

"I'm all right now," she said, growing calmer every moment. "I'll never forget what a splendid *consolatianer* you've been, Patricia, and when I get money of my own, I'll pay you back—see if I don't."

Patricia kissed her and they went about the business of getting to sleep as quickly as possible. But sleep did not come so easily to Patricia as usual. She lay awake until after midnight, but it was not alone

the banging and scraping and shouting that was going on outside that kept her eyelids open.

It was the knowledge that in her purse in the handbag on the sofa there was just enough money for one person's tips to the ship's people and a green one-cent U. S. postage stamp.

And the next morning when she awoke to the same banging and scraping and shouting, the same unwelcome knowledge thrust itself on her. She began to understand how Judith had felt the night before, and she wished very heartily that she had been more careful with her little store of spending money.

"I can't ask Uncle Nat or Mrs. Jinny," she thought as she crept out of bed for her usual peep out of the port-hole. "For that would tell on Ju, and she'd hate that almost as much as not being able to tip the people. I'll just have to grin and bear it. It's lucky we've had the same stewards wait on the two of us. *Oh, Jiminy, we're in Dutchland!* Wake up, Ju, wake up!"

The ship was steaming up the Scheldt.

She stared out, fascinated at the low line of the dykes, with the occasional houses and windmills strung along its green bank. The wind-bent rows of tall poplars that strutted in single file along the shore where her eye first caught it seemed particularly adorable to her, and she pointed to them with ecstasy to the bewildered Judith, who rubbed her sleepy eyes twice before she could see them.

"Pooh, they're just like the poplars at the Country Club at Hilltown, and you said you hated them because they leaned to one side," she said dispassionately. Then, as her eyes grew wider, she grew more interested and excited. She clutched Patricia's arm hard as she pointed an impressive finger to the distance.

"There it is!" she cried in Patricia's ear. "There's Antwerp."

Patricia's heart thumped hard as she squinted in the direction of Judith's quivering finger.

She saw a line, long and low, of massed buildings with their towers sharp against the morning sky, a city of the blue river-

mist lying on the sunny sparkle of the broad river like a cloud.

"*Antwerp!*" she echoed, and for once had no more words.

She would have stood there staring at the growing outlines of the cloud city, but Judith took command.

"Hurry up and get on your things, Miss Pat," she ordered briskly. "We'll have to get our bags ready for the stewards to take off right after breakfast, Mr. H. Landis said, and we mustn't leave a thing to be done, you know. Once we leave the room, we'll never come back to it again."

Patricia started at the words, but although the spell was broken now, she flew about still half in a dream, following Judith's calm instructions mechanically. She had no thought for the hurried breakfast, no concern for the partings with the friends of the last ten days, no interest even in the activities of the preparations for warping the ship into her berth, no eye for the changed appearance of the passengers in their shore clothes, no ear for the gay

promises of meeting in the strange cities of that land which lay before them.

She forgot that she was going to lose Mrs. Jinny in an hour or so; forgot it might be months or never before the faces of the little home group met her sight again; she had no memory of any duty to anyone—for the comradeship of all the years of her life was calling her, and her heart was throbbing, "Elinor, Elinor, *Elinor!*"

She did not feel the press of passengers about her as the ship swung broadside to her berth, and she stood straining her eyes to catch the first glimpse of the dear, familiar figure among the dense throng on the pier.

"Patricia!" whispered Judith sharply in her ear; "do you know you haven't tipped the deck steward? He's been terribly polite about your luggage and he's waiting about with the suitcase."

Patricia turned her impatient glance for a swift moment in the direction of the bowing Belgian, and suddenly she chuckled.

"He's been tipped, all right, Judy darlin'," she said merrily. "Tell him to bring the

suitcase here. He'll mind you better than poor me."

She caught the important swish of Judith's skirts as she turned again to her eager scrutiny.

"Funny little Judy, she's always acting out some part in a book," she thought, smiling tolerantly at her little sister's odd whims. "She's gotten twice the fun out of those tips that I'd have had."

Then Mrs. Jinny nudged her and pointed.

"There they are!" she said. "See, they've seen us and they're waving!"

CHAPTER VIII

PATRICIA'S PERFECT DAY

"IT'S like a story book," said Patricia, looking about her.

The first rapturous greetings were over and they were standing with Bruce and Elinor beside the long platform marked with a large **K**, waiting for their luggage to be sorted out of the mass of trunks, suitcases and handbags with which the platform was loaded. Mr. and Mrs. Spicer and Mrs. Shelly were stationed some distance away at the platform labeled **S**, all the luggage from the steamer being classified in this manner according to the initial of the owner.

"It's like a story book," said Patricia, looking at the police with their helmets with the nose-strap, the soldiers with their little red polo caps, the old country women with their short skirts and queer bonnets, the rough-coated ponies in brass-studded high-tilted farm carts, all jumbled together with

groups of silk-hatted, frock-coated burly Belgians kissing their bearded relatives with a vim no American or Englishman could have shown, and dandified important French officers in their showy uniforms simpering at the crowd from their speedy cars.

"Does it seem so strange to you?" asked Bruce. "I've been over here so much, I don't notice it now. You'll find some parts of Paris and Brussels ever so much more medieval than this. Antwerp is rather up-to-date, you know. The Belgians are a progressive people."

Patricia breathed a deep breath of satisfaction.

"I love it already," she said, with a sweep of her hand. "I like it all—the way they kiss each other on both cheeks, those big, whiskery men—and the funny, bumpy carts, and the nice, buttony porters, and oh, everything. I'm going to simply *adore* the rest of it, I know. I even like the hard old stones of this cold pavement because they are," she laughed a little ripple of surprised recognition, "why, of course, they are *Belgian blocks!*"

Bruce laughed with her. "'Pavé,' the French call them. You won't be so daffy over them when you've tramped some weary miles over them. They're mighty picturesque, but our prosaic old concrete and tarvia is good enough for yours truly. Here are the trunks at last. I'll see to them and be back in two winks."

The uniformed porter placed the trunks on the hotel luggage bus and Bruce, after a hasty word with the Spicers, then turned to the girls.

"We're going to take you by a roundabout way. The others will follow," he said, signaling an open carriage from among the throng at the side of the enclosure. "Bird's-eye view of the city, then lunch and then whatever we choose. We've got lots to talk about and plenty of time to do it. We don't have to leave till tomorrow morning."

"We're going to Brussels, aren't we?" asked Judith. "Mrs. Jinny says you mustn't disappoint them. She says they're counting on seeing the old square there with us—all of us together, for a sort of starter, she says."

Bruce looked at Elinor, who made a rueful mouth and shook her head, smiling in her sweetest fashion.

"We'll simply have to do it, you know," she said to him, and he nodded resignedly.

"We planned it all out over home, I remember," he agreed. "And a day or so won't hurt the old Jeremiah P., I suppose. She's stored and manned, anyway, and we can waste a day with a clear conscience."

"What *do* you mean?" cried Patricia, turning from the new outside world of the wharfage section to stare at her new brother-in-law.

"You tell her, Elinor," he urged. "You were the one who thought of it, so you ought to take the blame."

Patricia knew by the way his eyes were sparkling that something good was coming, and Judith, with a quick toss of her pale hair, spoke Patricia's own thought as she cried out:

"Oh, it's another surprise, I know it is! He looks just like that day at lunch at François' when he'd gotten Symons' studio for that lovely month. Is it anything like

that, Elinor? Have you gotten a studio here or in Brussels? Do tell us right off, please."

"How can she when you chatter so?" said Patricia, highly excited herself. "It isn't a studio, I'm sure. It's an automobile or—or—. What is it, Norn? Don't sit there smiling like a lovely Sphinx, or I'll go completely daffy and then the surprise won't do me a scrap of good."

"I'm trying to tell you," said Elinor gayly, "but three can't talk at once. It isn't a car, Squibs, and it isn't a studio, Judy, but it's something between both, for it has a studio on it, and it goes by gasoline, and it's in Middleburg waiting for us, and if you can't guess what it is you'll have to wait till tomorrow night."

"I know what it is," said Judith promptly. "It's a motor-boat. One of those little motor-boats——"

"No, it isn't," retorted Bruce triumphantly. "It isn't little. It's a whale."

"Well, it's a boat," insisted Patricia, thinking hard. "And I know what boat it is. For Hugo Ballinger has a Dutch

friend, or at least an American friend who lives here, and he has a motor-*barge*, as he calls it, and it's name is Jeremiah P. Jonah. It must be——"

"Discovered!" cried Bruce, pretending to be horribly disappointed. "Who'd ever thought our little Miss Pat could run us to earth like that, when the family Sherlock failed to get the scent? Don't you dare call her by her full name, though. We've dropped the Jonah part and we call her plain Jeremiah P. We aren't running any risks of shipwreck this trip."

A swift thought of her secret mascot flashed through Patricia's mind and she smiled to herself.

"But what is a barge?" asked Judith, uneasy at having to display her ignorance. "I never saw a barge."

"Canal-boat, in U. S. dialect, Judy," replied Bruce good-naturedly. "Fat, waddling canal-boat, painted pea-green, with white windows, and flower-pots on the edge of the deck."

"Oh-h-h!" sighed Patricia, "how heavenly that sounds! Do you mean

that we are going to *live* in it, Bruce? And for how long?"

"Two months," responded Bruce promptly. "We'll stop at the big cities and the villages and wherever we jolly well please, and we'll take just as long as we want to get anywhere. We're going to do Holland from start to finish, if fortune and our own whim favor us."

"We want to start from Middleburg and go north," explained Elinor. "Bruce has to get most of his studies in Friesland and Gelderland. I hope you girls are going to like traveling that way. That is the only thing that troubled me."

"Well, don't let it trouble you any more," cried Patricia, and Judith joined in the chorus.

"We're simply crazy over it!"

Bruce heaved a huge sigh of relief.

"Now that's over," he said with his twinkle very much in evidence, "I think you'd best let me point out the important items along our path. This is the Grande Place, and that neat building across the

way is the old Town Hall—Spanish style, built 1546."

"1546!" cried Patricia, astonished. "That fresh-looking place! Why, it looks newer than our City Hall! I don't see how they keep it so clean."

"That great big lovely church over there doesn't seem to be very new," commented Judith. "It looks as though it had been to a fire and gotten all smutty."

"'Smutty'—ye gods and little fishes!" cried Bruce. "That's the way she talks about the venerable dust of ages. And 'that nice big church,' too. Don't you know a cathedral when you see it, Judy? That stately, glorious pile is the finest pure Gothic cathedral in Belgium."

"Is it?" said Judith meekly. "I never saw a real one before, you know, and I'm too excited to remember photographs and such stuff."

Patricia was looking about her with eager eyes. The quaint old houses, well preserved and prosperous looking, crowding closely down on the narrow sidewalks, the modern shops with their old-time signs, all

fascinated her beyond the power of speech, and she drove on silently, listening to Bruce's explanations and Judith's happy chatter and Elinor's comments, feeling that she had reached the summit of happiness and that nothing more could be added.

She still felt this way when they were seated about the luncheon table, with Mr. and Mrs. Spicer and Mrs. Shelly beaming in their places across the board, and she felt it later while they were planning rapidly in the cozy lounging room of the old-fashioned hotel, while Bruce was signaling two of the comfortable open carriages from the line across the Place Verte, and Mrs. Jinny was protesting that Mama Shelly was still the best sailor and traveler in the party and that since she wanted to see everything in Antwerp before they started for Brussels, they'd better be getting under way.

She felt it more strongly when, their sight-seeing for the afternoon over, they dismissed their carriages and went in search of tea.

"We're going to a patisserie, Judith,"

said Bruce in his jolly, teasing way. "Suppose you two girls run on ahead and find the place for us."

Judith was very much set up over what she chose to consider a mark of high confidence.

"Very well, Bruce," she replied sedately. "I am sure Patricia and I will be very glad to do it."

Patricia, nothing loath to fall in with any suggestion on this enchanted day, started off willingly enough, and at so smart a pace that the others were soon left far behind.

"What did you say Bruce called it, Ju?" she asked, as they hesitated, uncertain which store to choose.

Judith looked perplexed. "He said patisserie, I'm sure," she answered, dubiously. "But I don't think he meant us to go so far. He'd have kept the carriages for Mama Shelly's sake. I guess we're off the track."

"Let's go back and meet them," suggested Patricia, scanning the signs as they retraced their steps. "See, they've stopped

and are watching us. Hurry up, Ju, and find the place. It must be near here."

Judith hesitated for a moment, then her face lighted and she plunged across the street, with Patricia following. At the door of a quiet shop she paused and waved to the still distant party.

"This is the place," she said to Patricia, pointing to the sign above the door. "They can come along when they please," she added loftily. I'm going in and see what it's like."

"All right," agreed Patricia readily. "I'll wait outside till they come up."

She saw Judith open the door and walk into the dim interior, and then she gave a short laugh, for her eye fell on the display window of the shop, and in it were long breadths of beautifully woven worsted tapestry, and the sign above the door bore the word "Tapiserrie" in big gold letters.

"Poor Judy," she thought. "She'll hate to have Bruce tease her about taking them into a tapestry store for tea. I'll haul her out before they get here and perhaps we can bluff them off somehow."

She hurried into the big dim store, but instead of finding a discomfited Judith retiring in confusion before the knowledge of her mistake, she met a very triumphant one, holding her blonde head higher than ever and bubbling over with information.

"Of course, it isn't a tea-room," she said quickly. "I saw that 'immejitly,' but, what do think, Patricia Kendall, they have a piece of tapestry just exactly like that one in Aunt Louise's studio at home in Greycroft, and you know Bruce always thought that there wasn't another piece like it. And I asked the price—but of course I couldn't understand how much it was in francs yet—and while I was asking a boy came out from behind the counter and stared at me frightfully. And he asked me my name and where I came from, so I asked him his, and it's *Piet Hubert Van Kelt!* What do you think of that?"

Patricia looked at her with a puzzled frown. "I've heard it somewhere, I know," she began, when Judith cut her short.

"It's the name of our Dutch miser," she declared crisply. "The miser who

owned Greycroft and built the sewing-room—no, the office—no, the *counting-house*—and died there, over his ledgers."

"Why, to be sure!" cried Patricia, remembering all at once. "I wonder if he's any relation? The boy, I mean. Did you ask him, Ju?"

Judith's glance was almost pitying.

"I should think not," she returned, starting off briskly. "I'm going to tell Bruce and Uncle Spicer and see what they say about it."

"Did the boy live in the store?" asked Patricia, keeping up with Judith's fleeing feet.

"Oh, no, of course not," said Judith calmly. "He wasn't that kind of a boy. He lives in Rotterdam, and his mother's name is just the same—only of course she's *Mrs.* Piet Hubert Van Kelt. We could easily find them in the directory, you know."

Patricia looked at her small sister with real admiration.

"You certainly are a ferret, Ju Kendall," she said solemnly, and was surprised

to see Judith redden as though hurt. "I mean, you're awfully clever to remember that old miser. Why, Ju, we've all forgotten about the old book you found in the attic when Miss Warner had the fire and the floor was torn up. What a pity you hadn't brought it with you!"

"But I did," said Judith. "In the inside pocket of my suitcase where no one would ever think of poking about. I wasn't going to say a word about it till I found some Dutch person whom I could trust."

"I must say you're awfully close," began Patricia, when a remembrance of what the inner pocket in her own suitcase contained, silenced her.

As they joined the waiting party in front of a pretty, attractive tea-room, and Judith blurted out her news, Patricia thought rather sadly:

"Ju's just as bad as I am."

Then, as she followed the others into the gay interior and saw the twinkle of candles and caught the scent of flowers, she amended it:

"I'm not a bit worse than she is."

But when they had selected their tables and given their orders she made another change:

"Everyone has the right to their own things and Ju's right to keep her own counsels."

And the memory of that jeweled mascot, still unconfessed, only added to the charm of that gay hour, giving her a sense of mysterious importance, and she almost pitied those who had no delightful secrets to guard.

It was only an hour later that she learned the tragic difference between Judith's small reservations and her own secret.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHADOW OF THE EAST

THEY had finished their tea and strolled over in the twilight to the Cathedral, and although it was not the hour for seeing the celebrated Rubens, they had gone in for a glimpse of the interior before going back to the hotel for their bags.

The light was fading fast as they went in and the great church was shadowy with the coming night. It was Patricia's first cathedral and she never forgot that moment. The vast spaces of that solemn temple, the great clustering columns rising whitely in the shadows and soaring to their blending in the arches above, made her breath come faster and her spirit rise reverently from the happinesses of earth to the purer joys of the eternal happiness.

She stood quietly while the others trailed

off, and drank it all in. Through the silvery dimness of the shadowy nave and choir, twinkling lights from the altars of two little side chapels flared on the gorgeous robes of the priests and the red robes of the little acolytes serving there, while clouds of incense floated out across the wide spaces between the dim arches, joining with that age-old cloud from bygone censers that hovered high among the lofty arches of the far-away roof.

Patricia sighed a deep sigh of satisfaction and then caught her breath again.

The bells of the famous chimes had been murmuring down a rhythmic prelude to the flood of melody that now suddenly surged from the choir and swept, wave on wave, to every nook and corner—a glorious, swelling, triumphant burst of exultation.

"Oh!" whispered Patricia to herself. "That's the first music I've really ever heard!"

She sank down on the nearest chair and gave herself up to the enchantment of its sonorous, thrilling beauty. A soaring, boyish, angelic voice rose high above the

others and Patricia's heart was singing with him.

Then in the midst of it the Welsbach lights on the clustering columns began to flare out with their hard, unearthly light and the magic of the first pure delight was gone.

Bruce and the others came softly back and silently they all went out into the bustle of the gay streets again.

"I can understand now," she said as she slipped her arm into Elinor's and fell into step, "how dearly the people must love their church—how they simply can't stand a plain little building and a simple service. Why, that wonderful church *makes* you religious in spite of yourself. You can feel it in every particle of the place."

"It isn't the fine robes or the music or the service that makes you feel that way, Miss Pat," said Bruce earnestly, bending forward to see her clearly in the twilight. "Don't fool yourself as to that. It's the *integrity* of the building—the fervor of the age that made it—the faith of the workmen who chipped the stone and painted the windows. That cathedral is the faith of the fourteenth

century done in stone and left to show us what those old fellows were made of, spiritually."

Patricia flashed an eager glance of comprehension. "That's just it!" she cried, delighted to have found the true explanation of her spiritual uplift. "I felt as though it weren't like the places we make nowadays, but, as I'd never seen a service of that kind before, I thought it must be the singing and the incense and all that."

"It's just *good work*, and that's what it is," said Bruce, with his eyes aglow. "That motto means everything in the world when you come down to it—'Labor is prayer' and good work is godliness."

"And we aren't really good unless we do well the things we have to do," added Elinor seriously. "That makes every little thing in life worth while, doesn't it, Squibs?"

Patricia nodded, her eyes kindling at the thought; and then a newsboy thrust himself before them, crying his papers in funny broken English, and Patricia, feeling still very much elevated in spirit, bought an additional one after Bruce had gotten a

couple, just for the fun of hearing him talk.

She folded the paper away till they should be in the train and so she did not see the picture of the man's head with the fez and the long, dark hair that occupied so prominent a place on the front sheet.

When they were comfortably ensconced in the compartment of the cozy second-class railway carriage and Brussels was still half an hour before them, she bethought herself of the paper, with the hope that she might be able to decipher some of the news. She had discarded Bruce's New York *Herald* without a glance, being bent on testing her French, and she spread the paper on her knee with a little laugh at the ease with which she read the first heading.

And then she saw the picture.

"Why," she began, bending toward it, and was going to add that here was her man of the steerage, confessing the incident of the mysterious gift to add interest to his printed picture, when her eye, traveling swiftly through the jumble of strange words in the black headlines, caught the word, "vol de

nuit," and then again, "voleur" and "abducteur," and she caught her lips between her teeth.

"It can't be the same," she thought, protesting against even the thought of tragedy breaking in on her perfect day. She read the scanty headlines again, stumbling through them more bewildered each time.

Judith was looking out at the dark landscape flying past the window, Elinor was reading half of Bruce's paper and Patricia's flutter of spirit passed unnoticed, much to her relief. She was glad that she had not gone into the next compartment with the Spicers, as she had intended, for she feared that the keen eyes of the veteran collector might have patched some link between her and the steerage passenger.

"How silly I am," she thought, shaking herself out of her panic. "I didn't do a thing to be afraid or ashamed of. I'll ask Bruce to read the article for me, and then I'll tell them of my one little meeting with the man. Perhaps he is the one who is robbed, after all."

Bruce looked up pleasantly and took the

paper without any surprise at her request.

"The robber of Selim Bey's caravan still at large," he read. "Has evaded the police of two continents and is now believed to be in New York."

Judith turned from the window with an air of disapproval.

"I do think your taste is degenerating, Miss Pat," she interrupted the reading to say severely. "You didn't always care for such low stuff."

Patricia murmured something inaudible, and Bruce went on carelesly, while Elinor, frowning a little at the hard words, tried to follow his reading. .

It was a grimy story of oriental plot and intrigue, and Patricia shuddered at the thought that she had touched with her own hands one of the principals of that dark tale, and she shuddered again when Bruce, with a laugh at her startled face, tossed the paper back, and she saw again on the inky, smudged sheet, the eyes of the secret donor of her lucky knife looking at her from the page.

Bruce and Elinor went on with their reading and Judith kept her whole attention on the obscured landscape, while Patricia numbly pretended to go on with her reading. Her thoughts were racing over the incident in the steerage, recalling the few words and gestures of the hawk-faced man.

"How could I know that he was so wicked?" she thought, chilled with the fear the article had brought to her. "How could I guess that story about his daughter was not true and that the dagger was so valuable? He only wanted to get rid of it, and he saw I was a silly thing that would swallow any story."

She kept the paper up before her face while her mind raced through the bare and revolting facts of the case the center of which was the very dagger she had so rejoiced over.

An enemy of a petty rajah had intercepted one of the rajah's caravans and made off with two of its chief treasures—an Armenian slave girl and a richly jeweled dagger which the rajah had just succeeded in wheedling, by both trickery and much gold, from an old

king in the interior Shawnwar. The man had then disappeared from the surface of life, taking both slave girl and dagger with him. The police drag-net had been spread over all India, but India has many underground byways, and bribery can do much. It was now much more than a month since the robbery, and no trace of the daring thief had been found.

By the very boldness of his return he had escaped notice and Patricia knew, with a sinking heart, that although the police were looking for that man in New York, he must somehow have evaded them and slipped away in the steerage of the "Corona," for the face of the man on the page before her was, barring the difference in beard and dress, the face of the man in the steerage and the lucky knife so safely tucked away in that secret inner pocket of her suitcase in the rack over Bruce's head was the jeweled dagger of the powerful rajah.

"How horrible it is," she thought frantically. "How horrible to know that I've got it. I don't know what to do. I don't

know whether to tell Bruce and have their honeymoon spoiled, or to tell Uncle Nat. No, I can't spoil Mrs. Jinny's good time. For it would be spoiled if they had to get mixed up with this thing. No, I'll have to think it out myself. I've brought it on myself and I'll have to make a way out."

She sat for a while brooding and then she burst out, with a vehemence that startled Elinor.

"How I hate those hideous Eastern creatures! They go about spoiling the world for other people. They aren't fit to breathe the same air with decent people. Think of that divine music in the cathedral, and then this," and she struck the paper with her quivering hand. "Oh, I loathe and abominate and abhor the East. Nasty, creeping, underhand, greedy *tigers*—that's what they are!"

"Why, Miss Pat dearest, you mustn't get so agitated about it. It's just a bit of the Arabian Nights in real life," cried Elinor, bending over to catch her hands. "That Oriental tale has got on your nerves and you're tired to death, too, I'm sure.

Do cuddle down and rest a bit. We've twenty-five minutes yet."

Patricia sighed and shook her head.

"I'm not really tired at all," she said, squeezing Elinor's hands gratefully. "I only got worked up thinking about it. It's so—different, you know, from anything that ever happened to me before."

No one noticed the personal note in Patricia's explanation, and she caught herself together sharply, the fear that she might involuntarily betray her secret striking a new cord.

Elinor noticed the change.

"That's right, dear," she said gently. "You really mustn't take things in the newspaper so to heart. They can't touch us, you know, and we are here for such good purposes and such good times that I don't want one moment clouded with that sordid under-side of life if I can help it."

Patricia knew then more than before that she must go through with it alone.

"I'll have to find a way," she said to herself miserably, and as the train rushed

on through the darkness the words wove themselves into a pulsing refrain to the tune of the throbbing engine—"I'll find a way, I'll find a way, a way, a way."

CHAPTER X

INTERMISSION

THE stolen dagger lay heavy on Patricia's conscience, and the memories of Brussels were so interwoven with the first pain of those miserable days of dread and doubt in regard to her harassing secret that she could not think of the beautiful old Grande Place without a shudder, and the Guild Houses and Town Hall with their tragic memories of the slain Horn and Egmont brought only a pang, long after they had been left far behind and the little party of four were on their watery way to Rotterdam.

They had said good-bye to Mrs. Jinny and her husband and little pink-cheeked Mama Shelly at the Station de Midi in Brussels, and wished them all good luck in their ramble through the chateau country where they were bound, and then they had themselves gone back to Antwerp and

hurried on to Middleburg, where they had taken up their quarters at once in the fat, placid-looking Jeremiah P., and had begun their leisurely journeyings on the waterways of Holland.

Patricia had had a hard time trying to appear her own natural, enthusiastic self, and had not always succeeded to her own liking. She had to put a close restraint on her ready tongue that she did not even hint at the trouble which was consuming her, and if she had not been in such fascinating and diverting scenes she might have confessed out of sheer nervous fear of that hawk-faced man of the steerage, whose eye she had come to believe might be on her, following her and perhaps resolved to recover the dagger when the first danger of discovery was over.

If Judith had not been so entirely absorbed in gathering and recording her impressions in her new notebook, and if Bruce and Elinor had not been so equally absorbed in each other, Patricia's absent manner might not have passed unnoticed; but as it was, her long brooding silences

and watchful scrutiny of every dark face that came into her range of vision were alike unobserved.

She had missed half the historic sights of Middleburg and Veere because of that watchful scrutiny, and she drew her first free breath when they left the canal that cuts Beveland, and floated out on the wide expanse of blue water between Schouwen and Tholen.

"Thank goodness, we're out of those narrow streets at last," she burst out as she stood with the freshening air blowing kinks into her bright hair.

Elinor looked up from her book in surprise.

"You surely aren't tired of the cities already, Miss Pat?" she asked in gentle wonder. "We've a lot of sight-seeing in the big towns yet, and I do hope you are going to enjoy it."

Patricia was dismayed at the narrowness of her escape, as she hurriedly replied, "Oh, I didn't mean I disliked the cities, Norn dear. I only meant that the salt air felt good after the warm crowded streets. I

love the water so. You know I've never been on a house-boat before, and this is such a duck of a boat. You know I've hardly had a chance to see it, although we've had it three whole days."

Elinor nodded, keeping her finger on a place in the map she was studying. "Middleburg and Veere were fascinating, weren't they?" she said, dreamily. "Bruce doesn't seem to care so much for them as for the other places, but I've always loved the history of Zeeland, and even now I can see those early wild inhabitants repulsing the conquering Romans, and loving their boggy, island country all the more for having to battle with both sea and their human enemies for it."

Patricia stood with her hand on the rail, looking across the sparkling expanse to the north, her bright face growing brighter as she gave herself up to the freedom of the wide, serene waters.

"I like the story of Leyden almost the best," she said. "But that brave lot of starving people in Haarlem always makes me glad we have some scrap of Dutch blood

in us. It's very far back, of course, but, do you know, Norn, I'm frantically proud that one of our ancestors did come from Holland, and I always hope he was a Haarlemer, for I think they were the bravest people that ever lived, and I'd be prouder still if I knew he had died guarding those broken walls while the bloodthirsty Spaniards were clambering in to their wretched victory."

"You wouldn't have had much of an ancestor in America if he had died there," said Judith, who had been curled up on a cushion, scribbling away in her beloved notebook, and they all laughed at this sudden puncture of Patricia's fervor.

"Now, what *I* like best of all," said Judith, sitting up very straight and tossing her mane, "is old Van Marck sailing in to Brille with his little ship full of the Beggars of the Sea and scooping in the place without a bit of trouble. I never could see why William of Orange didn't like his doing it, for it must have made the patriots feel that they were doing something at last."

"William knew the people weren't ready

to fight—they didn't have enough money or soldiers or anything," explained Patricia rather impatiently, for William of Orange had been their household hero ever since they had discovered in some old papers of their father's a letter to a friend in which Mr. Kendall spoke of the Silent Prince as the noblest figure in history. They had read and studied much about him and had come to Holland with all their memories of that splendid martyr revived and glowing, and Patricia, in particular, was his devoted admirer and advocate.

"Don't be a goose, Ju. He surely knew more about it than you can now," she said tartly. "It's easier to sit on a cushion and criticize than to make a tiny country rich enough and good enough and brave enough to fight all the riches and power of the world."

Judith looked at her approvingly. "You say things terribly well when you're worked up, Miss Pat," she said, opening her book. "You don't mind if I put that down, do you? I'll put your initials to it, of course."

Patricia could not help laughing at Judith's intense air.

"All right, Infant, write it down in letters of brass, if you will. I'm going down and make some of my old-time candy—some of the extinct *Three K* brand. Who wants to help?"

Judith and Elinor both flew after her as she disappeared to the dainty little kitchen of the Jeremiah P., and when Bruce, half an hour later, came out of the studio to look for them he found them hilariously concocting sweet-smelling messes amid a gale of merriment.

"We're just re-hashing some of our candy-making experiences," explained Patricia, as he put his head in the low door. "'Way back in the dark ages before you knew us, Bruce. We did have *such* times!"

"They weren't half so funny then as they are now, though," said Elinor. "We didn't laugh over your visit to Mr. A. Swinglebaum then, did we, Miss Pat?"

"I should say not!" rippled Patricia, as the memory of how the three of them had wept disconsolately into the tub at Greycroft sprang to her mind's eye. "I couldn't

have believed I'd ever find it anything but tragic, and yet here we are, grinning like Cheshire cats over it."

"That's the way with lots of things," said Judith with her air of old wisdom, which went oddly with the candy spoon she was licking with great enjoyment. "Lots of things just *scorch* you while they're happening, and afterwards they merely make funny stories to tell when you're sitting about before the fire or at tea."

"Hear the words of the Oracle," mocked Bruce. "How many incandescent experiences may you have known in your immeasurable career, Miss Wiseacre?"

Judith laid down the cleaned spoon. "You may laugh, of course," she replied with kindly tolerance. "My troubles don't seem much to you because I'm still in middy blouses, but I can tell you, Mr. Bruce Haydon, I have known—quite—a—few. Grown-ups are very dense at times, but I'm sure *I* shall never forget that children can *feel*."

Bruce patted her shoulder with a tender touch.

"That's true enough, indeed, Judy machree," he said. "But I hope you won't ever let things bother you *now* without coming to me. I'm as secret as the grave and as anxious to be nice as any old grown-up could possibly be. If you have troubles, either of you," he added, including Patricia in his affectionate speech, "let me help make them disappear. I won't even tell Elinor, and mortal man on his wedding trip couldn't make it stronger than that, could he?"

Judith flew to him and kissed him, while Patricia squeezed his hand, and while Judith was chattering, Patricia resolved that if she could not find some way to settle the affair of the stolen "lucky knife" before they reached Rotterdam, she would take Bruce's offer and let him help her out of the difficulty.

"I'll have to do *something* when we get there," she decided disconsolately, as she set the pans of candy away to cool and washed her hands at the tiny sink before following the others up to the studio to see Bruce's sketch of the skipper, a stout,

silent person who spoke so little that Patricia had dubbed him the Figure-head.

"I'll have to settle it some way," she thought, and she shivered. "I'm determined on one thing, though. And that is, the trip shan't be spoiled for the others by any fault of mine if I can help. Whatever I do must be quick and quiet."

Then the thought of Judith's words flitted into her troubled mind and she felt momentarily more hopeful.

"Perhaps I'll come to laugh at this yet," she mused, wiping her fingers slowly, one after the other, on the crash towel.

She ran up to the deck and flung back her head for a long, deep breath of the free air, and in the wide silences of the broad waterway she could hear the little waves lapping contentedly at their prow, while the pulse of the motor purred smoothly. Everything was placid and sunny and Patricia felt reassured.

"Judy's usually right," she thought gratefully, "and I won't worry any more till I have to. I've got the thing and I can't throw it into the water, and if there's any

luck to it perhaps it will help me to get out of this scrape. I'll wait and see."

She found them discussing Bruce's version of Hans Vroom and arguing at the same time about the propriety of looking up Judith's acquaintance of the tapestries, Piet Hubert Van Kelt, as soon as they reached Rotterdam.

Patricia admired the sketch, which was masterly, and plunged at the same time into the discussion, siding with Elinor and Bruce that they had best wait until they were about ready to leave before calling on Mrs. Van Kelt.

"You see, Judy, she might be so injudicious as to invite us to things, and we haven't time to frivol," explained Bruce patiently. "Of course, there's the chance she wouldn't do any such thing, but if she did, we'd have to respond, and there we'd be wasting good time in palaver."

"I know, *but*—" began Judith, when Patricia interrupted with a laugh.

"I'll give in, for one," she said gayly. "When Ju gets to *but*-ing that way, it's hopeless. I vote for rushing to the Van

Kelt house the instant we're in Rotterdam. All I stipulate is that in case they do turn out to be the old boy's descendants, Judy doesn't insist on sharing Greycroft with them."

Judith fairly went pale at this. "Do you mean they'd have a right to it?" she asked, aghast at this suggestion. "Could they take it away from us, Bruce? Oh, I wouldn't go near them if I thought they could!"

Bruce shook his head sorrowfully at her. "Unscrupulous woman that you are," he said gravely. "And I thought you a pattern of piety and rectitude!"

Judith was so alarmed at his manner that Elinor hastened to relieve her.

"Of course they haven't any right to it, dear," she said, quickly. "Aunt Louise's relatives *bought* it from the niece of the old housekeeper, and that made it ours."

"Did it, Bruce?" persisted Judith, raising her fearful eyes to him. "Are you sure?"

"Entirely and perfectly sure, Judy dear," said Bruce seriously. "I can tell you in the legal terms if that will make you feel better.

You mightn't understand the right of adverse possession—"

"Never mind that," interposed Judith hastily. "I don't care about anything so long as we have Greycroft."

"They might take any silver or personal possessions that had been old Piet's," Bruce went on, "but they couldn't touch the house. That's bought and paid for and out of their reach. But if you'd found any of that silver plate that you were always lamenting the loss of, Ju, you'd have had to yield it up to them if they were the real heirs."

Judith, now recovered from her fright, tossed her head airily.

"I'm glad I didn't bother, for it would have been so horrid to have had to give it up," she said ungenerously. "I don't care half so much about going to see them now, anyway, and I'm awfully glad I've only that old school book of his. I suppose they'll have to have that, but it's no good to me, since I can't read Dutch and it's out of date at that."

"I am glad you brought it along, Ju,"

said Elinor. "It really may interest them to have a school book of their ancestor's (if he is their's) come to them after all these years from so far away. It's an additional reason for calling and finding out if they are the descendants of old Piet."

Bruce suggested submitting the book to Hans to determine what sort of lessons it contained, but Judith protested.

"I won't show it to anybody till we get to the Van Kelts," she said firmly. "I hate fussing over things so that the edge goes off. I want to write down how moved we were when the real heirs recognized their venerable ancestor's handwriting and traced the progress of his youthful studies in the yellowed page."

"Phew, is that all?" exclaimed Bruce, bursting into a roar of mirth. "Well, keep your treasures to your little self, Miss Judy, and we won't even glance in its direction till the young heir with a noble gesture——"

"Now you're teasing!" said Judith severely, "and that's a waste of time. If you haven't anything more to talk over, Elinor, I'm going on with my writing. I've got tons

about Veere to do yet." And she left them, closing the door behind her with great nicety.

Patricia, when she joined Judith on deck and sank into the deep wicker chair, had an uplifting sense of reprieve.

"I won't think of it till I see the steeples of Rotterdam," she planned, "and then I'll make up my mind what I'm going to do. If I can't find a way before we go to bed that night, I'll tell Bruce."

CHAPTER XI

PATRICIA'S PLAN

THEY slipped smoothly into Rotterdam at twilight and the Jeremiah P. nosed her way among the clutter of small craft to a berth by the dock just as the first star pierced the pale saffron of the evening sky.

Dinner on the boat was over, for the twilight comes late to the Low Countries in early summer and the sun does not set till long after the eight o'clock bell has sounded.

Patricia, with her decision suddenly made, was planning desperately as she pinned on her hat before the little gilt-framed mirror in the cabin.

"I'll drop behind to look in a shop window while we're walking about," she said to herself. "And I'll choose a place that is good and dark. Then I'll drop the package and go on again with the others. That won't do anyone any harm and will get the terrible

thing off my hands. I shall never feel like my own American church-going self again till I'm clear of it all."

She felt in the pocket of her linen outing skirt for the little hard parcel.

"What a pity it has to be mixed up with such horrors," she thought, as she slipped on her linen jacket. "It's perfectly beautiful and it certainly seemed to be a 'lucky knife' at first. I suppose I ought to be ashamed to even hint at such superstitions. But I really *did* think there might be something in it at first, everything seemed to go so beautifully. I suppose I'm being punished for my wickedness now by being haunted with that horrible man's face wherever I turn. I've missed half the fun of the trip and I'm getting as nervous as a cat."

When she joined them on deck and they strolled towards the gayer portions of the town, Patricia had little mind for the traditions of the Boompjes or the diversions of the Wyde Kerkstraat where Bruce pointed out to them the house of the learned Erasmus who had so skilfully skirted the

rising storm of religious persecution in his fatherland.

The gay Hoogstraat was too brightly lighted and full of busy, bustling people to appeal to her purpose, and she could hardly make herself practice the dissimulation she had planned in stopping before many shop windows and seeming particularly diverted by the wares displayed, but she did manage to loiter so long at a bookseller's window that even the patient Elinor urged her on.

"Miss Pat's simply daffy over shops tonight," complained Judith a little later as they turned into a darker street. "I'm coming with you, Bruce, and Elinor can lag along with her if she chooses."

"All right," returned Bruce good-naturedly, tucking Judith's hand in his pocket. "We'll creep along ahead and if they don't catch up at the corners, we'll go back for them."

Elinor was so deeply interested in the sights about her that she scarcely heeded Patricia's lagging inspection of the windows; and when Patricia dropped behind she did not miss her till at the corner of the next

wide street, Bruce and Judith put the astonished question:

"Where is Miss Pat?"

Elinor looked at them with her beautiful eyes wide and alarmed.

"She was right alongside of me just now," she said in a startled tone. "I thought she had gone on ahead to meet you."

Bruce looked down the dim street with the bright patches of lighted windows and street lamps.

"You girls wait here by this fruit shop and I'll go fetch her," he said with a little frown at Patricia's carelessness. "She oughtn't to be wandering about by herself like this. I'm surprised at her."

He started off at a smart pace in the direction they had come and it was evident that he was going to read the erring young lady a lesson on the necessity of keeping her wits about her in strange cities at night.

They waited what seemed too long a time for such a short excursion, and then Elinor began to grow uneasy.

"Something must have happened to

keep them," she said. "I wish we hadn't promised to stay here. We might go to meet them and go back to the boat that way."

"Maybe Miss Pat has seen something she wants to buy and the man can't understand English," suggested Judith, shifting from one foot to another. "That would take a lot of time, you know."

Elinor accepted this idea cheerfully. "That must be it," she said. "She was so taken up with the shops, she must have been looking for some special thing and when she saw it she forgot all about me and went in the shop. I hope Bruce doesn't miss her."

They hailed Bruce eagerly as he came back to them and his disturbed expression lightened somewhat at this explanation of Patricia's disappearance, but when he had searched the shops of both sides of the street, he returned to them alone and with great anxiety on his face.

"I don't know what to make of it," he said. "I can't imagine where she could have gone. Those tiny alleys wouldn't

tempt her, for there isn't a shop in any of them, and besides, she couldn't get out of them without our having seen her."

"Perhaps she has gotten confused and missed us, and has gone back to the boat," suggested Elinor, at her wits' end for an explanation that was possible and at the same time practical.

Bruce looked incredulous. "I don't think so," he said, "but I'll go and see. You girls will have to stay here till I get back. She might turn up and miss us again here if we all left. You don't mind staying, do you?"

Elinor scouted the idea. "The fruit stand will be open for an hour yet, the girl told us," she replied. "We can be on the lookout too, in case she has gone past in the crowd to the next street. We can see half way down it from here."

Bruce started off and then halted and came back.

"I wouldn't mention the fact that one of our party is missing, if these people here chance to ask," he said in an undertone. "Just say that we left something in our

boat and you are waiting for me to fetch it."

Elinor nodded and he went swiftly off and disappeared at the other end of the street where Patricia might have started on her way back to the Jeremiah P.

Judith was silent and Elinor lost in anxious thought and the time hung heavily. No sign of Patricia rewarded their long scrutiny of the dull street, and though Judith added variety to her vigil by going the length of the fruit stand and scanning the brighter cross street with minute care, no trace of the bright gold hair under the black sailor hat was to be seen.

After a long, long interval, Bruce came back.

His face was white and careworn, and he spoke shortly and with a hurry in his tones.

"We might as well move on now," he said tersely. "She won't turn up here now. She hasn't been to the boat. Hans was just turning in. I'll go notify the police after I see you two safely disposed of. Did Patricia know which hotel we were going to, Elinor?"

Elinor shook her head, but Judith replied:

"She wasn't there when you told us. She was in the cabin getting ready," she said. "She'd go back to the boat if—if——"

Bruce made a gesture of impatience.

"Well, if you are sure of that, we had better go back at once. Our bags are safe at the hotel, and I'll telephone later," he said, and taking one on each arm, as though determined to be sure of their safety, he started off at a brisk pace.

"I know you don't mind walking," he said as they hurried on. "A cab would be quicker, but if she is lost and wandering about she'd see us the more easily three abreast this way."

They eagerly agreed and then fell silent again as they each pictured Patricia in distress, Patricia lost and bewildered, wandering about the strange city in the dark.

They reached the boat only to find it empty save for Hans and Franz, the handy boy.

"I can't understand it at all," declared

Elinor, as they stood in the tiny cabin together. "It isn't a bit like Miss Pat to get lost. She has twice as much sense that way as Ju or I have. There is something strange about it."

"Very strange indeed," responded Bruce. "I'm afraid—" he stopped himself and said more hopefully, "We don't know all the ways of each city. Perhaps she's safe in some gendarm's care, waiting for us at that blessed corner."

"Send Franz if you have any such idea," begged Elinor. "He's a good, reliable boy, if he is only a stoker of a canal boat. He knows the place and he adores Miss Pat. He can stay there all night if need be."

"All right," said Bruce. "And I'll be off to give notice to the police. If she should come in before I get back, let Hans go to the nearest telephone and call me up."

He was starting off when Elinor caught him by the sleeve.

"But how will he know where to call you?" she asked.

Bruce hesitated a moment. "Call the

American consul. I'll go there first," he said and then he ran off in search of Hans and Franz to give them their instructions.

Elinor and Judith looked at each other.

"I wonder where she can be?" said Judith in a whisper, creeping over to Elinor.

No words came to Elinor's lips, but a heavy sigh fluttered from them. The dread that they would not put in words was growing stronger with the heavy passage of every moment. Judith put her head down on the encircling arms, with a burst of wild weeping.

"It's so dark in the canals, and the water is so deep," she sobbed, and Elinor, with a swift pang, knew what she meant.

"I don't think—" she began in a low, quivering voice, and then stopped, choking with her own sudden tears.

"Hark! What's that?" cried Judith, sitting up wide-eyed. "That noise, like carrying something up the gang plank!"

Elinor listened in frozen horror.

There was a sound of footsteps, hurried

footsteps multiplied by their strained ears into a throng of heavily treading feet.

Then the door of the little cabin was flung open and they both started to their feet.

CHAPTER XII

HOW THE PLAN WORKED

PATRICIA stood on the threshold, her gray eyes alight and her cheeks rosy with excitement, and behind her in the doorway was the beaming face of Bruce and the smiling countenance of another but entirely strange young man.

"Patricia!"

Elinor and Judith cried her name out in one breath, and with one simultaneous rush they flung themselves on her.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Patricia gayly.

Her eyes were dancing and her dimples showing as though she had shaken off every care in the world and she looked so far from the desolate wanderer that Elinor held her off at arm's length to look at her.

"Why, Patricia Louise Kendall, you look positively *radiant!*" she exclaimed reproachfully. "And here we've been almost dis-

tracted about you—thinking you were kidnaped or had fallen into a canal, or——"

Patricia bubbled over at this. "You said that precisely like Ju might have," she said, and then seeing the marks of tears on both faces, she caught them to her with an outrush of pitying tenderness. "You poor lambs, you've been stewing yourselves almost to death about me, haven't you?" she asked with instant self-reproach. "I never dreamed you'd be in such a state, or I'd hurried——"

Bruce broke in on her with affectionate impatience.

"That's all right about hurrying," he said. "It doesn't matter much whether you're early or late, so you are here. You hurled some information at me when we met on the gang-plank, but I can't recall whether you said that Mr. Van Kelt rescued you from a watery death or merely brought you——"

"Van Kelt!" cried Judith, recovering herself at once. "Why, it must be another one of them!"

Bruce turned to her with a bow. "Allow

me to present Mr. Van Kelt to Miss Judith Kendall, and I trust," he said airily, with another bow to the amused young man, "that Miss Judith Kendall's classification of you as 'another one of them' won't prejudice you against us as a family. You will find my wife, Mrs. Haydon," with a third bow to Elinor, "quite ready to receive you as a human being."

At this they all laughed, and the tension being broken, explanations were eagerly demanded and as eagerly given. They all sat comfortably down in the cozy little cabin and pieced out the tale of Patricia's wanderings and their own anxieties, with Mr. Van Kelt's part as rescuer of the lost showing prominently in them.

"So you see," said Patricia at last, "I never dreamed you'd be so anxious about me, for you knew I could easily get back to the boat. I didn't know we were to go to a hotel, of course, but no doubt Hans would have told me or taken me there. I remembered the way we had come perfectly, when once I got back to it."

"What I don't understand," said Bruce,

"is why you got twisted up in that alley where you say you stumbled into the sloat. Why didn't you come right back to the street again, instead of going out through the back entrance?"

Patricia shook her head impatiently.

"Haven't I said a dozen times that I thought someone was following me? Besides, I wanted to go *quite* to the back of the place. There was a bright lamp where I was—" she broke off, and Judith took up the inquiry.

"Why in the world should you want to rummage about in the dark in a perfectly strange city, Miss Pat?" she asked seriously, with her tear-stained eyes fixed on her sister's face.

Patricia hesitated for the fraction of a second. "Just because I wanted to, Miss Sherlock," she responded, with a return of the gayety of her entrance. "I wanted to and I did it, and you've all had a dreadful fright, but it's over now, and you're the gainer, Ju, for Mr. Van Kelt can tell you lots that you want to know. I've been asking him questions as we came along,

and he knows all about the Van Kelts from start to finish."

Judith pounced upon the pleasant-looking young man with avidity.

"Are you really the progeny of the old miser?" she asked, with a flush rising to her pale cheeks.

Mr. Van Kelt smiled and bowed. "One of them at least," he replied so gravely that Patricia giggled, but Bruce interposed.

"We won't put Mr. Van Kelt through a catechism tonight, Judy," he said with emphasis. "We know that he has brought Patricia safely out of the mystic maze of alleys and streets that she'd gotten lost in, and that's enough for us now."

Turning to Mr. Van Kelt, he went on: "We can't adequately thank you for your kindness to Patricia, of course, but I am sure we all feel we should like to be better acquainted, and if you would be good enough to brave the culinary dangers of the Jeremiah P., we should be very happy to have you take luncheon or dinner with us tomorrow. Our short stay here makes us urgent, you see."

The young man held out his hand to Bruce with a cordial gesture, and his blue eyes shone with a friendly light.

"I shall be very glad, indeed, if I may come," he said, including Elinor in his glance. "I am at liberty for luncheon, and, if you care to see the city in the afternoon, we may be able to arrange a little sight-seeing tour in my car."

They thanked him, accepting his acceptance and invitation at once, and after more grateful words had passed, Bruce, who had to recall the devoted Franz from his post on the street corner, showed him out and they could hear the footsteps of the two echoing overhead.

Elinor laughed a little reminiscent ripple. "That sounds mighty different to us now, doesn't it, Judy?" she asked, pinching Judith's cheek lovingly. "We thought it was a funeral procession, didn't we?"

Judith nodded and then tossed her head.

"Miss Pat doesn't seem to care much for all our worrying," she said, and Patricia started from her smiling revery.

"Don't mind me, Ju darling," she

smiled. "I'm so glad to be alive I couldn't be grumpy for anything in the world. Come and kiss me, just to show you don't bear malice. There's a dear."

Judith reluctantly edged over to her where she stood in the doorway twirling her hat by one of its pins, and she kissed her rather grudgingly. It is hard to weep and find that one should have spared their tears, and Judith cast an almost resentful glance at Patricia's radiant face.

"It seems to me, Patricia Louise Kendall, that you're tremendously set up over that young man," she said severely.

Patricia turned such astonished eyes upon her that Judith fairly blinked.

"Young man!" she exclaimed witheringly. "*Young man!*" and without another word she turned and walked out of the cabin.

Judith listened to her bumping things about in the stateroom which they shared together and then she sighed resignedly.

"I suppose I'm wrong this time," she said. "But there's been something queer

about Miss Pat lately anyway, and I guess I can't understand her anymore."

Elinor took the dismal little figure in her arms.

"Miss Pat's all right, Ju dear," she said soothingly. "You're too tired to think about anything. Go to bed and forget all about it now. We're going to have a splendid time tomorrow, and you must be fresh for it. Good-night and happy dreams."

Judith was unconvinced, but she did not argue with Elinor. She *was* very tired and sleepy and she knew Patricia well enough to know that she would get nothing out of her tonight except perhaps some teasing for her pains. So she slowly trailed off through the narrow passage, thinking ruefully as she went of the probable chaffing that was in store for her.

As she softly pushed the door wide and slipped in, she had another surprise, for Patricia, instead of being in wait for her with gay shafts of wit, was kneeling by her berth, with her little Bible pressed against her heart and her lips moving

in what seemed to be a passion of gratitude. The white folds of her night-dress fell about her and the light caught on her bright hair, and she looked like some fair saint come to life from the paintings that Judith had been making such copious notes about in the last few days.

Her lips were moving, and Judith was sure she caught the words, "Thou hast brought my soul up from the grave," and her face brightened.

"Oh, are you saying that thirtieth Psalm?" she asked, interested at once. "I remember when Miss Emmet made all our class learn it by heart to say before the Board," and she went on with it, giving the sounding sentences of the stately Hebrew poetry with a will, while Patricia, with her eyes still closed, softly followed with her lips.

When Judith came to the next to the last verse, she stopped.

"I see now!" she said with a satisfied nod. "That's the way you feel about being rescued—'girdled with gladness'—I see."

Patricia rose with a rather tired smile.

"It's good to be *trying* to be a Christian anyway," she said, to Judith's great mystification. "I'm so thankful, Ju, that I'm not a Turk or Persian or any of those other horrid, creepy things."

Judith looked at her hopelessly as she swung herself into her berth.

"Well, of all queer people!" she began, and then stopped as though she gave it up.

She undressed without another word to Patricia and, snapping off the light, slipped into her own berth with a perplexed pucker in her brow.

"I do hope foreign travel isn't going to spoil Miss Pat," she thought as she drifted off to sleep. "She's gotten awfully *emotionalized* lately and I don't like it."

Patricia for her part was so busy going over and over the incidents of the evening that she forgot even to say good-night to Judith, and it was not until she heard the regular breathing in the berth above her that she had a pang of compunction.

"Poor Ju," she thought regretfully. "It's the first time I've ever forgotten her good-

night, I believe. I wonder what she'd think if she knew all about the lucky knife? She'd make a dozen stories out of it, I'm sure, and she'd enjoy every one of them."

After a few loving thoughts of Judith's passion for out-of-the-way stories, she went back to the burden of her thoughts—the dagger of Selim Bey.

"I wonder who will find it?" she mused. "I hope—oh, surely no one will get into trouble about it just by *finding* it. I hadn't thought of that." She started up uneasily, all her satisfaction gone. "I meant it to come to light somehow, of course, so they might guess that that wretch was not in America as they supposed, but I didn't mean anyone to be harmed by it."

Her gladness had dropped from her at the first realization of the complications that might come from her simple act of dropping the fatal dagger into the gutter of the dark alley, and now she shivered.

"I do believe I'm never to have any peace about the wretched thing," she

groaned, pressing her face into her pillow. "If I'd only realized what I was doing—but I never can see an inch before my nose when I'm excited, and I've made an awful muddle of it after all."

She recalled the sinister character of the alley and a picture of lurking figures watching her every movement rose before her with dreadful clearness.

"If anyone saw me throw it away, I'm done for," she sighed. "Why didn't I throw it into the sea and be done with it? I wanted the police to find it, but I didn't dream of anyone else. I wonder what will happen? I wonder if anyone *did* see me? Oh, I hope it won't be in the papers tomorrow morning. I'll have to get them and look before Bruce gets a chance at them."

She sighed again as the weight she had been so long burdened with settled more heavily down upon her.

"Perhaps I won't have a chance to break it to Elinor and Bruce. Perhaps they'll come and arrest me before I can explain," she gasped in a climax of terror and dread.

CHAPTER XIII

THE FREEDOM OF ROTTERDAM

WHEN Patricia crept on deck the next morning it was still so early that the white boards were glistening from their daily scrubbing and the sun's long rays had the cool pink of sunrise.

No fierce gendarmes waited either on Hans' spotless deck or on the wharf beyond. Many people were astir, but the sounds that met the ear were all everyday, comfortable sounds—no clank of soldierly scabbards as police moved through the cheerful morning workers, no military-looking capes nor nose-straps in sight.

Patricia drew a breath of relief.

"They may be along any time, though," she admonished herself. "And I'd best see if I can get hold of the papers. I may learn something from them."

Hans was invisible, so she pounced on Franz, who assured her in his very Dutchy

English that the papers were on the news-stands long ago, and hurried off grinning to get a sheaf of them.

Patricia spread them on the wicker table and sat down with the fresh morning air blowing the cheerful sounds of wharf and water-way to her inattentive ears. She did not expect to be able to read the Dutch papers and even the French might tax her severely, but she did hope to reassure herself by the pictures, and so she turned the pages, hastily scanning each rough print that met her eye in the vague hope that it might relieve her harassed mind.

The first paper had nothing in it that she could possibly connect with the dagger of Selim Bey. She laid it down with a sigh of relief.

"Perhaps it's all right," she thought, taking up the second sheet, a copy of the paper which had first shown her the man of the steerage as a murderer. "I'm a goose to get so awfully upset."

She shook the creases out of the ink-blotted page and then her heart stood still.

On the front page, just where they had shown it before, the face of the thief looked out at her and just below it in a space of extra width, the jeweled dagger which had played so large a part in the newspaper columns and in Patricia's own perplexities, was shown in actual size.

Patricia sat shaking like a leaf, paralyzed by the sight of these two pictures in conjunction. Her mind was in a whirl and she could form no definite idea of what to do next. The French in which the article was written was the idiomatic French of the daily newspaper, and Patricia's feeble French was of the variety that makes anxious inquiries about the pen of the gardener or the hat of the aunt of the sister of the shoemaker, and so the piece was practically unintelligible to her.

"What's up?" asked a brisk voice in her ear, and she started to find Bruce smiling down on her.

"Why so studious this morning?" he asked. "Trying to glean the news of the town to foist off on the various Van Kelts today?"

It was Bruce's turn to start when Patricia lifted her miserable eyes to his.

"Oh, Bruce," she said helplessly, catching at his hand, "I want you to help me. You said you'd do it, you know, but Elinor mustn't know."

Bruce glanced quickly from the open paper to her white face, and though he showed his perplexity, he responded heartily.

"Sure thing," he said, warmly pressing the hand that held his with a strong, reassuring grasp. "I told you girls to rely on me, and I'll be glad to be of use."

"You won't tell Elinor?" asked Patricia dubiously. "It would make her feel dreadfully, I know."

"Not a syllable," promised Bruce stoutly.

Patricia gulped. "She may have to know it soon from—from—others," she said, "but we'll keep it from her as long as we can. There's no need for her to suffer."

Bruce began to look seriously alarmed.

"You'd better tell me quickly," he urged. "The others may be up at any moment now."

And Patricia, crushing the paper in her

clenched hands, poured forth the whole story, telling him every little detail with feverish accuracy, as though to atone for her secrecy at last and in full.

"And so you see I threw it into the gutter in that alley last night and then hurried out the back way because I was afraid that the man might be after me. That's how I got lost. I thought I was rid of it for good and all and I was almost wild with the relief. I was *so* thankful and happy. Then after I went to bed I got to thinking and I was simply scared stiff for fear someone had seen me and I'd get you all into trouble. So I got the papers to see if there was anything about it, and *look at this!*"

She thrust the sheet wide before him and pointed with a shaking finger.

Bruce looked, started, read a line or so and then he whistled.

"Your luck's with you this time, Miss Pat," he ejaculated with a fervor that made Patricia love him more than she ever had. "Listen to this."

Patricia followed him through the maze

of words that spelled out her release from the haunting dread that was consuming her, but her mind was in such a whirl that he had to explain them to her before her bewildered comprehension grasped them fully; and then she sprang up with a cry and buried her face on his shoulder.

"The police got it after all, you see," he explained again, trying to soothe her sobbing. "You did the right thing at the right time and place. The old boy is captured in Constantinople and the dagger is in the hands of the Rotterdam police, and you are safe and happy here on the Jeremiah P. Brace up, Miss Pat. You don't want Judy or Elinor to catch you sprinkling my manly shoulder with your pearly tears, do you? They're bound to show up in a moment or two."

Patricia raised her head and looked at him through her reddened lids.

"Are you *perfectly* sure that I didn't do any harm to anyone by keeping the knife or by throwing it away?" she asked with such seriousness that Bruce grew grave again.

"You didn't do a bit of harm, my dear," he said impressively. "Your taking the knife while that wily Indian was on the boat may have saved some trouble, for if he had gone to the hospital and it had been discovered on him, some inquiry would have been made and there might have been a scrimmage and some good clean American blood might have been spilled."

Patricia sighed deeply. "Oh, if I could only think it!" she cried. "I've been so *agonized* over it!"

"And as for chucking it into the gutter last night," Bruce went on kindly, "that seems to have been the hand of fate using your hands for the benefit of the whole. The policeman who found it turned it in at once and there was an examination of the jewels of the hilt, and they found that one of the diamonds belonged to the famous necklace of the Princess Van der Meer which disappeared last spring. If the knife had been taken back into India no one would ever have known it."

"But what has that to do with it?" asked Patricia, dazed by the melodra-

matic tangle into which she had been swept.

Bruce held up a warning finger at some sounds from below.

"It gave the police here a clue, the paper says," he answered in a hurried undertone. "Cheer up, Miss Pat. You've seen the end of the business, and while it's been a mess, you've come off very well indeed. Chase down and swab your eyes now, or Judy will be leveling her guns on you. Breakfast will soon be in order and you ought to have a bully good appetite."

Patricia gave him a rapturous squeeze. Her spirits were soaring already.

"Bruce Haydon, you're a perfectly adorable duck!" she cried, and fled from the sound of Elinor's approaching footsteps.

The Jeremiah P. had left the busy wharf and floated into a byway of the canal, and the papers had disappeared when they all met at breakfast on deck, and Patricia thought she never had known a happier meal. The sun was so gay, the passing boats so friendly and the little party on the Jeremiah P. all were in the highest spirits.

The morning slipped away in letter-writing and idling about on the cushioned deck. The retreat which Hans had chosen for them was secluded and agreeable, and the glorious sense of entire freedom from the fear which had dogged her for so long lent an additional charm to everything for Patricia.

Bruce had telephoned to Mr. Van Kelt where he should be able to find them, and promptly at the appointed hour he turned up, extremely well gotten up and very pink as to cheeks, blue as to eyes and hearty as to manner.

"He shows up awfully well in the daylight, doesn't he?" commented Patricia to Elinor as they watched him come aboard. "I was so flustered last night I hardly knew what he looked like."

"He looks like a very reliable and likable young man," said Elinor with warm approval. "If the other Van Kelts are as nice, we may make some very pleasant friends in Dutchland."

"I think he's by far the most *impeccable* person we've met since we left home," said

Judith, pulling at her hair ribbon to make it stand more erect. "I like him very much."

Patricia made a face at her and groaned heavily. "There she goes, Norn, at her old tricks. I'll 'wagger,' as Hannah Ann says, that she added him to her list of eligibles the moment she clapped eyes on him last night. Isn't it the saddest thing you ever knew how she will——"

"I didn't, either," broke in Judith with her face flushing. "I never thought such a thing! I'm ashamed of you, Patri——"

"Come, come, we must go meet him," interposed Elinor, and as she ran lightly up to the deck, Judith and Patricia followed, and Patricia found time to squeeze Judith's hand and whisper, "Never mind, Ju, I was only teasing," before Elinor's greetings were over and their guest was shaking hands with them.

Patricia liked him better for not asking if she had suffered any fatigue from her experience of the previous evening. Grown-up young men with ceremonious high hats and frock coats were often stupid about

trifles, and she had been afraid when she saw the high hat and pale gloves that he was that sort. But Mr. Van Kelt treated the incident as a normal occurrence and he rose in her esteem proportionately.

His pleasant, unassuming manner and his evident good nature as they chatted over the excellent luncheon which Bruce had ordered from a nearby hotel, won the favor of them all, and when Bruce at his request took him off to the studio to show him his few color notes and sketches, Elinor nodded across the devastated table to Judith with a twinkle.

"I give my consent, Judy dear," she said. "He's just the sort of young man I'd pick out for a brother-in-law,—if you must insist on selecting one immediately."

Judith flushed and tossed her mane, but did not disclaim the design that she was laughingly charged with; Patricia giggled immoderately at the mixture of dignity and embarrassment which her prim little face exhibited, though she refrained from any more teasing.

"I'm glad that the other Van Kelts are

coming to call right away," she said, jumping up from the table and pulling Elinor with her. "It's very decent of them when they don't know us from Adam. Come along and smooth your hair, Norn, the wind has fluffed it up scandalous-like for a dignified matron like you."

Patricia had never known, even on that day of landing in Antwerp, such a glorious day as the one she spent at Rotterdam, for with the dread that had so long darkened her, gone forever, she had an exhilarating sense of escape adding zest to all her pleasures. And when Mr. Van Kelt had jokingly offered them the freedom of the city, Patricia felt that it had a special meaning for her.

"I'm free, free, *free!*" she whispered to herself exultantly, as she smoothed her own wind-blown hair before the mirror in her room. "That horrible creepy underground life of the East shall never touch me again, God willing, and I'll never have another secret of any sort from Norn or Mrs. Jinny. I'm not made for secrets, I guess. I always get into trouble when I try to be sneaky."

A memory of the night she had surreptitiously borrowed Miss Warner's dress for the Hilltown military ball with such dire consequences flitted through her mind and she nodded her head vigorously at herself in the glass.

"You stupid thing, you'll never learn," she said, frowning at her bright reflection. "The Lord's saved you from *horrors* this time just by the skin of your teeth, and I hope you'll be grateful enough to be good for the rest of your life."

The Van Kelts were arriving and she hurried on deck to meet the gentle black-robed Mrs. Van Kelt and her sturdy red-cheeked Piet. Her good resolutions made her very unselfish and deferential, and although Judith was the heroine of the hour, Mrs. Van Kelt was entirely won by Patricia's sweetness of manner.

"I hope you may be able to bring your sisters to dine with us," she urged as she and Elinor chatted together; "I have fallen in love with Miss Patricia. We are very quiet now, of course, but tonight I have an old school friend with me who

sings well, and you might enjoy the music."

Elinor was on the point of refusing, but the mention of music made her hesitate, for she knew how dearly Patricia loved it, and the opportunity of herself hearing some really good music appealed to her strongly.

Bruce and Judith were deep in discussions of family history with the two male Van Kelts, but Patricia's quick ear caught the invitation and she turned to Bruce with an eager look.

"Oh, Bruce," she cried, "won't you stay for it? We can leave late tonight and go on all night. Hans won't mind, I'm sure, I do so want to hear some good music. That boy soprano in the Antwerp cathedral has made me simply *ache* for more."

Bruce gave a good-natured assent, knowing as none of the others could, how much Patricia needed the uplift of her beloved music.

"But we won't start tonight," he said. "Early morning will do quite as well for us, and Hans will not suffer for our sins."

So it was arranged that after they had seen something of Rotterdam in Mr. Van Kelt's car, they should all take dinner together at his cousin's house.

"Then I'll bring the old school book and you can read it for me," said Judith as Piet was taking his reluctant leave. "It really belongs to you, you know."

Piet threw out his chest with a generous gesture. "Oh, I get all the school books I want at the Academy," he said. "You better keep it."

Judith looked after him with regret. "I wish he was going with us," she said seriously. "He's the very nicest boy I ever knew."

"I'll tell that to Frad when we meet him in Amsterdam next week," threatened Patricia gayly. "I don't believe he'll be overcome with joy at that speech."

"Oh, well, Francis-David is old and grown up almost," argued Judith. "Piet is the sort you can play with, you know."

"Car's ready," called Bruce from the shore, where he and Mr. Van Kelt had escorted the callers, and Patricia pushed

Judith before her down the gang-plank with a gay laugh.

"Look out for Judy, Elinor," she warned. "She's turning into a real human being."

Patricia, full of good resolutions, begged for the seat by the silent chauffeur, and so she lost much of the solid information about the interesting old city which the others in the body of the car enjoyed, but her heart sang within her as the gray car sped through the throngs and wound its way past stately buildings, shooting suddenly at last out in the open country with a whirl that blew away her speech.

She looked her inquiry with her head craned backward while they tore on, and Bruce, who was nearest, shouted in her ear, "Delft and Schevingen! We've got to rush to make them."

And rush they did. Houses and gardens flew past them in one blurred line of color, and Patricia's heart was in her mouth lest they should crash into the other vehicles that they seemed to shave by such a narrow margin. It was useless to try to ask questions or to enjoy the scenery, for, as

Judith said after they stopped breathless and triumphant before the Prinsenhof in sleepy Delft, there hadn't been any scenery —just whizzy streaks of things.

Patricia forgot all about scenery or questions when she stood with the others in the place where their hero-prince had yielded his life to the bullet of the assassin whom he had just benefited. How real it all seemed to her—the sudden crack of the pistol, the fall of the generous William on the stone steps, the rush of the infamous Gerhard for safety, all sprang into being before her. Her heart burned with passionate wrath against the ungrateful murderer. A sob escaped her.

She stood there by herself after the others had gone into the Museum, and with an undercurrent of that other disaster in her mind, she measured the difference between them.

"That Selim Bey affair was loathsome and sordid, but this is the treasure of an entire nation," she thought. "The horrible murderous part of it is almost forgotten in the glory of the life that the

victim lived." She mused on this critically and then the gist of her thought broke out.

"Good living can't be soiled or stained—even by murder," she said triumphantly aloud to Bruce as he came back for her. "William the Silent is only held higher by this," with a sweep of her hand to the bare stair and bullet-marked wall. "It's the living that counts more than anything else. And, oh, Bruce, I do *so* want to be good!"

Bruce put an understanding arm about her as he spoke.

"We all of us want to, little Pat," he said gently, "but we can't do it alone, you know," and then he hurried her out to the gray car which was panting at the door, and they sped away again on their mad flight.

Patricia went to bed that night with a delicious jumble of music, historic reminiscences, and the Van Kelt family history in her sleepy mind.

"We've had a glorious time, haven't we?" she said to the very wide-awake Judith. "I never heard more beautiful

singing than Mrs. Nordhof's, and all the Van Kelts are simply *ducks!* I'm tremendously indebted to you, Ju, for unearthing the miser's progeny, as you call them. We'll have a splendid time when we come back in August, won't we? I don't believe Leyden can be half so lovely as Rotterdam has been."

"Wait and see," said Judith, snapping off the light regretfully. "You never know what's going to happen."

CHAPTER XIV

MRS. NORDHOF'S LETTER

"YOU see, Judy, nothing really happened after all," said Patricia as the Jeremiah P. slipped through the last lock and Leyden grew dim and indistinct in the distance.

"Well, we had a good time, anyway," replied Judith easily. "One doesn't want to be doing thrilly things all the time, do they?"

Patricia, with the memory of her own experience of "thrilly things," shook her head violently.

"Not me!" she asserted with ungrammatical vigor. "I'm done with thrills. The simple life is mine forever, I hope. Good, plain, every-day Christian life for me!"

Judith looked at her critically. "Do you feel as though you were going to be ill, Miss Pat?" she asked solicitously, and

on Patricia's laughing denial she gave a sigh of relief. "You've been sort of queer since we reached Antwerp, you know," she explained. "Sort of stupid sometimes and awfully gay at others. I thought perhaps you were feverish or something."

Patricia looked suddenly grave. "I'll tell you something, Ju," she said, impressively. "I've been on the brink of something mighty serious, but I'm all right now. That's why I'm so frisky. Sense of deliverance, you know."

That was the last reference Patricia ever made to her connection with the dagger of Selim Bey, and from that sunny day on the way to Haarlem till they took the steamer for home, no more dreadful memories troubled the bright hours of their pilgrimage through the Low Country.

"Wasn't it simply marvelous that the Leydeners didn't have to give up like the poor Haarlemers?" said Judith, as the bulky Jeremiah P. slid into the River Spaarne, and the glass-paneled walls of the houses along the river front flashed like jewels in the late sunshine. "Although I

must say that I like the looks of this place better than Leyden. Those funny black doors and lovely flower gardens are much nicer than anything we saw in Leyden."

"It is lovely," agreed Elinor, as the boat slowly swung along the glittering canal among the colors of a vivid sunset, while the ruddy russet colors of the fantastic step-roofed houses on the brick-paved streets winked their sparkling eyes at the little party of voyagers in the most friendly manner.

"It doesn't seem possible that it was ever a scene of murder and famine and rapine," said Bruce, who had been smoking and painting in the studio and now came out to join them in their first impressions of Haarlem. "See how placid and happy it looks in the sunset. Everything is so permanent and so—conscientious."

Elinor nodded. "But it looks to me like the calm of conscious strength," she mused. "They know that they could starve and die for their convictions, for they've done it once before, and so they aren't excited about anything else."

"I'll have to explore for mail," said Bruce as the boat tied up at the picturesque quay and Hans brought them the information that they had reached the end of that day's journey. "We ought to hear from the Spicers and your recreant brother, too. He hasn't told us just when he'll join us, and it's about time he did. Who wants to go along?"

They all did, and they found the streets of Haarlem just as delightful as they had looked from the canal. The church into which they peeped was not so magnificent nor so stately as the Antwerp cathedral, but the reformers had left enough of the beauty of the old days to charm them with a flavor all its own, while the cannon ball imbedded in the wall told its story of Spanish misrule, and they were more than satisfied with the result.

They found their letters waiting for them, and there was such an interesting pile of them that Bruce suggested reading them while they dined in some restaurant or hotel instead of going back to the boat for dinner, and the suggestion was eagerly adopted.

The old hotel on the Kruis-straat proved just the spot for such diverting business, and the long, Dutch dinner added the spice of its variety to the reading of the many missives.

Francis-David had written as had been hoped, and instead of Amsterdam he appointed Alkmaar as his place for joining the party on the Jeremiah P.

"Which means," said Elinor, laying down the sheet, "that he's going to be a whole week later than he said he would. I wonder if anything has happened?"

"Of course not," replied Bruce; "he's probably hung over for some tennis tournament or some such diversion with Tom Hughes."

"It's lucky *we* aren't apt to change our plans," said Judith, investigating a queer meaty entree with relish. "We're going on like clockwork, aren't we, Bruce? One day at Rotterdam, one day at Leyden, then Haarlem and Amsterdam and Monnikendam and Marken and Zaandam and Alkmaar and Enkhuisen. My, what a string of places!"

"How long shall we stay at Alkmaar?" asked Patricia, her eyes dancing at the prospect of so much exploration.

"Don't know," returned Bruce, deep in the contents of a business envelope. "Depends on the people I can get to pose. Hello! Here's a queer thing, Elinor."

They all looked up expectantly.

"Stein writes me that I must stop at the bank in Amsterdam for a private message from him the beginning of next week. I wonder what it means."

"Nothing very serious," returned Elinor. "If it were, he'd tell you to go at once. It's probably some personal matter—some errand he wants you to do for him."

Bruce frowned at the blue envelope. "Not likely," he replied thoughtfully. "I'm not well enough known at Amsterdam to help him there. He has the bank to do everything for him."

"Perhaps it a secret mission—" began Judith, but Patricia leaned over and put a firm finger on her lips.

"No more mystery plays for us, young lady," she said tersely. "Bruce can attend

to his affairs without any suggestions, I'm sure."

Bruce put the letter away with the others and took up his coffee cup. "Well, it's puzzling, but it can wait, I suppose," he said. "We'll be back at Amsterdam on Monday by our schedule anyway. So we don't have to change our plans. What's the news, Miss Pat?"

Patricia had opened an envelope in unfamiliar writing, and an exclamation of surprise fell from her lips as she read. She turned sparkling eyes to Bruce as she answered excitedly:

"Oh, Bruce, and Elinor, and Judith, isn't it lovely? And to think of being so sweet to me when I'm such a stranger. Isn't it *perfectly wonderful?*"

Elinor rippled gently. "Tell us what is so wonderful, Miss Pat," she said, "and then we'll see if we agree."

Patricia poured out an agitated account of the letter, which was from Mrs. Van Kelt's friend, Mrs. Nordhof, and in which she offered to send a card of introduction for Patricia to Madame Milano, the famous

lyric soprano who was spending the summer in Leeuwarden.

"And she'll try my voice and tell me if it's worth anything," said Patricia breathlessly. "And she says I mustn't speak of pay, for she and the Madame are school friends and she will do it for her sake. She doesn't take pupils, but sometimes she criticizes voices. Oh, isn't it the best luck in all the world?"

"Mrs. Van Kelt is a good friend of yours," said Elinor gratefully. "She was talking to me, that night, of your singing and said she should like to have Madame Milano's opinion, but that it was most difficult to get and she did not know if it would be possible."

"When does she say you should get to Leeuwarden?" asked Bruce. "We'll have to alter our map if our schedule doesn't suit, for it's too good a chance to be lost."

Patricia's face clouded. "She says I ought to see her on next Tuesday," she said in a disappointed tone. "I don't suppose we can make it, since we're going to Zaandam on Tuesday night."

"Make it?" cried Bruce briskly. "Why, of course we'll make it. We're coming back to Amsterdam on Monday to get my mysterious message from Stein and we'll make tracks for Leuwarden *instanter*. We can meet the prima donna and have the judgment and get back to Alkmaar by rail if need be, or we can wire that scamp of a Francis-David to wait till we come. It won't hurt him to cool his heels a bit in quiet Alkmaar."

Patricia in the rush of her grateful enthusiasm reached over and kissed Bruce a resounding kiss on his nearest ear.

"*You duck!*" was all that she could manage, but it spoke volumes.

Judith was still feeling much scandalized over Patricia's performance on Bruce's ear, as they walked back to the boat in the long twilight, but Patricia herself was in the seventh heaven of grateful rapture.

"To think of them being so sweet to me," she said over and over again. "I didn't do a thing to deserve it. I didn't even try to sing for them."

"If you had a talisman now—a rabbit

foot or some such thing—you'd know just how such luck came to you, wouldn't you?" asked Bruce with a smile.

Patricia nodded understandingly, but Elinor spoke promptly.

"Miss Pat doesn't need any talisman besides her kind heart and unselfish goodness," she said with a loving look at Patricia. "We all feel the charm of that sort of lucky piece, and I don't wonder Mrs. Van Kelt succumbed."

Judith stood still in the street, with a gesture of dismay.

"Do you know," she said disgustedly. "What with the automobile and the dinner and singing and all, I never remembered that old school book I was going to give Piet. He must think I'm an awful fibber."

"He told you he didn't want it," said Patricia. "He's forgotten all about it by now."

"But I haven't," said Judith firmly. "I'm ashamed of myself, but I'll do it up tonight and I'll send it off the first thing in the morning. Oh, dear, how stupid this foreign travel does make one."

"What's your hurry, Infant?" asked Bruce, signaling Hans to put down the gang-plank. "We'll see them in August, anyway."

"August will be too late," said Judith obstinately. "I'm going to send it now."

CHAPTER XV

BREAKFAST AT AMSTERDAM

HAARLEM, and Monnikendam, Marken and Vollendam were things of the past, and Amsterdam, which they had hastily passed at night without a stop on their northward flight—if the progress of the steady Jeremiah P. could be called a flight—was growing into life-sized proportions as Patricia finished dressing and hurried on deck that bright Monday morning.

The canal from Broek had been a constantly shifting scene of beauty, and from the little window of her cabin Patricia had reveled in mossy farm-houses and hay-fields, with sweet green meadows showing their low line of spring-like verdure. A horse in a blue coat had made her rouse Judith, and together they had watched the unfolding of the pictures, too eager to stop to dress and too much delighted

with the reflected beauty in the canal before them to miss one misty curve or sun-bright open stretch of water.

But when they had turned into the North Sea Canal the spell had been broken and they had scrambled through their dressing to catch the sight of Amsterdam in its early morning dress. Patricia had as usual beaten in the race and was alone on deck to enjoy the panorama.

The queer houses of the harbor charmed so much that she could hardly wait for the others to join her when Hans brought the Jeremiah P. to berth, so eager was she to explore the fascinating jumble of bent old houses and bustling streets among which the canals glittered in the morning sun like enchanted pathways to happiness.

They were to breakfast on shore, so as to get as much of the town as possible in their limited stay, and Bruce hurried them off as soon as they were all assembled on deck.

"I'll have to find out when the trains and steamers go so as to decide when we have to start for Leeuwarden," he said. "I hope

we may be able to take the boat to Harlingen, instead of going to Enkhuisen, as we don't want to go over the same ground twice, and Enkhuisen is on our plan for the Jeremiah P.'s trip north."

"That would be nice," said Judith, wisely. "To go to Leeuwarden from Harlingen would be so different from going to it on our way from Stavoren to Groningen. I do hope we can do it."

"Ju wants to see all of Holland in a wink," laughed Patricia as they turned into a bright, modern-looking street. "As for me, I'm so contented with being *anywhere* on this adorable, clean, comfortable, little gem of a country that I am enraptured with any old place you take me. If I felt any more satisfied, I'd purr."

Bruce had led them to a dear little peaked-roofed house that seemed out of place in the sleek neighborhood, but Patricia caught her breath at the delightful interior, and Elinor openly expressed the wish that she might be able to paint it.

"I can tell by Judy's looks that she's planning a stunning description," said Pa-

tricia as they seated themselves and Bruce began the interesting business of ordering the breakfast. "Make it good and strong, Ju, or it won't fit. The pewter and brass alone would wipe out my vocabulary in one lick."

Judith sighed over her sister's inferior English, but made no response, and they were soon absorbed in the railway and steamboat schedules that the waiter brought them while breakfast was in preparation.

They hummed and hawed over them after the fashion of people consulting schedules, and made false starts and missed connections till Bruce, who had been the most silent one, nodded in a satisfied way.

"That will do the trick," he said, marking the time-tables with two fat black lines. "We'll go by boat to Harlingen and then to Leeuwarden by rail. It's only about forty minutes to Leeuwarden, and we can afford to take a bit more time getting to Harlingen, for the sake of seeing an entirely new place."

"Oh, I'm so glad," exclaimed Judith in a relieved tone. "I did so want to see Harlingen, because I never heard of anyone

going there and it would sound so nice and unusual in my diary."

Bruce laughed. "They say there's not much to see. Even Baedeker seems to turn up his nose at it. It is principally noted for being swallowed up by the sea. It went under in the twelfth and sixteenth centuries, I believe, and the Spanish governor de Billy dyked it about with huge sea walls."

Judith nodded eagerly. "And his statue is still on the sea wall. They call it the 'Steenen Man.' I do hope we can see it."

The waiter came panting in under the huge tray and the breakfast became the chief point of interest for a while. Then Bruce hurried them off to buy the tickets and arrange for the rest of their time.

"I'm going to get a new camera, larger size, so that I can get some good photographs or any peasants by the way that may prove interesting. Leeuwarden is in Friesland, as you of course know, wise Judith, and if the singer lady does not take too much of our time we may run out to some of the villages while we're in the neighborhood."

"What are you going to do with your old one?" asked Elinor indifferently. Photography, even from the point of study work, did not appeal to her.

Bruce looked at the two girls speculatively.

"Judy doesn't seem much interested, either, so I suppose it goes to Miss Pat, if she wants it."

"Do I?" cried Patricia delighted. "Just try me, that's all. I'll have a gorgeous time, snapping everything I see. It's awfully good of you to give it to me, Bruce."

Bruce grinned. "Particularly when I don't want it any longer," he said. "Better lay in a trunk-load of films, though, if you're going into it wholesale."

Patricia made a rueful face. "Oh, bother; I forgot that part of it," she admitted. "It never seems fair to have to pay for just films."

"And just developing, and just printing," added Bruce, smiling at her dismay. "You'll have to go without candies and ices if you're going in for photography, I can tell you."

Patricia brightened. "I don't mind.

I'm not awfully fond of either. It will be heaps more fun to have a nice lot of pictures when we get home. I'll get three films for this little trip and I'll have a collection of Friesland subjects that will make Miriam Halden turn green with envy."

"Do get a good lot, Miss Pat," urged Judith unexpectedly. "For when we meet the LeGrandes, they'll simply gloat over us if yours are not as good as Aimée's. She was going to get a three-by-four in Paris, you know."

"No, was she?" cried Patricia, much interested. "Well, we'll just show them that the family and associates of a noted artist can get together a better collection of pictures than any mere outsider, won't we, Bruce?" Mine's a four-by-five, too," she ended proudly.

It was still too early for either the banker's or the Ryks Museum, where Bruce wanted to stop for a short time to investigate the Costume Room, about which he had heard but never seen; so they bought the new camera and supplies, Patricia investing in a portrait attachment for her lens, in

order, as she said, "to get a whack at the gold helmets of Friesland," and they sauntered through the pleasant morning streets very happy and well satisfied with all that they saw.

"When we get back," promised Bruce. "I'll show you the sights. There's enough in the Ryks Museum alone to keep us here a week without half seeing it, let alone the town with its ninety islands and three hundred bridges, and old, old buildings, and memories of Spanish and French dominion."

"It's the chief money market of Holland, too," said Judith, with her wisest air.

"Which reminds me," said Bruce, looking at his watch, "that we have just time to stroll along at our leisure to the bankers. We can get our letters and the message from Stein and then take the train to the Ryks. I'll want an hour there at the very least."

They went along the busy Kalver Straat to the imposing building where Stein and Hoorn had their banking house, and Bruce went in for the letters while the others waited for him outside, preferring the

sights and sounds of the bustling Straat to the quiet interior of the banking house.

"I hope we shall see the Kalver Straat at night," said Elinor. "They say it is the gayest place possible. If we didn't have to get to Leeuwarden tomorrow morning, we'd dine in one of these pretty restaurants and see the sights; but," she added, noting the shadow on Patricia's face, "we can do all that when we come back. Amsterdam won't evaporate in one night, I'm sure."

Patricia shortened the time of waiting by taking two snapshots, one with Elinor and one with Judith in the foreground.

"There," she said, screwing the fresh film into place. "That's the beginning of my collection. When I've snapped the gold helmets of Friesland and the head pieces of Groningen and Drenthe, I won't take a back seat with anyone. Most people don't go to those places."

"I wonder why Bruce stays so long—" began Elinor uneasily, when Bruce came out of the big doorway and joined them on the pavement.

His face was grave and puzzled, but in

answer to Elinor's anxious questions he merely said that he had gotten the message and letters and they could now go on to the Ryks.

"We'll stay there for lunch if you don't mind," he said, signaling a taxi. "I'll get all I can of those costumes while I have the chance. It's lucky I brought my colors along. My permit is good everywhere, so I can get through a good bit of work by the time we have to start for the steamer."

"Aren't we going back to Jeremiah P. before we leave?" asked Judith in surprise. "Why, our bags are there with all our night things——"

"Of course, we'll have to get them," said Bruce absently. "I forgot you girls had left your duds there. It's lucky, too, old Hans brought us into the Heerengracht where he did, for it's right on our trip back across town, and we won't have to go out of our way for them."

As the taxi flew along Patricia, wondering at Bruce's unusual air of haste, put the question that was in all their minds.

"Why do we have to rush so? We'll

have lots of time when we get back, won't we?"

Bruce relaxed his thoughtful scrutiny of some new time-tables to smile at her.

"We may, to be sure, Miss Pat," he said; "but you never can tell, and a bird in the hand is the only one you're certain of. We'll pretend that we have only one chance to visit Amsterdam, and we'll keep our eyes as wide open as nature will let us."

Elinor looked at him narrowly. "There's something you are hiding from us, Bruce" she said with gentle certainty. "But of course, if you can't tell us, if it's something to do with Mr. Stein's business, we'll have to be content to stay in the dark. Did you get any letters for us?

Bruce started and clapped his hand to his pocket.

"By Jove, I forgot the letters!" he exclaimed, and pulling out a fat bundle, he dropped it into Elinor's lap.

"One from Hannah Ann for me, and two from the Haldens for Miss Pat," she said, sorting them rapidly over. "And here's another one for you, Patricia, Leeuwarden

post-mark. Mine are all from the Spicers and the home people,—Margaret Howes, and Griffin——"

"Oh, I hope it isn't to tell me I'm not to go!" cried Patricia, eyeing the Leeuwarden letter in dismay.

She tore open the envelope and her face brightened as she read.

"Listen! Did you ever hear such luck?" she exclaimed. "Hugo Ballinger says they're going to be in Leeuwarden for a week and wants to know where they can meet us."

Elinor and Bruce gave voice to their pleasure in the news, but Judith, who had seized a square little envelope which had fallen unnoticed on the seat, and had torn it open with a startled expression on her face, gurgled out in such surprise that they all three turned their astonished eyes on her.

"Piet and his mother are going to be there!" she cried. "And they want us to stop over Tuesday night with them at their hotel. Oh, won't it be perfectly lovely,—all of us there together hearing

Miss Pat sing before the *coloratura prima donna!*"

Bruce and Elinor laughed, but Patricia shuddered. "I hope you aren't such a goose as to think I'll have to sing before such a mob as that," she said hastily. "I wouldn't go a step if I thought that was the program."

"Piet is going to bring the old book, too." went on Judith. "He says it's not a school book at all. It's a '*prayr*-book'—such spelling for a boy of his age!" she broke off to stare at Elinor with dilating eyes.

"Oh, Elinor!" she cried in alarm. "Old Piet Hubert Van Kelt's will was in a prayer book. Suppose this is the very book?"

CHAPTER XVI

THE MEETING AT LEEUWARDEN

PATRICIA followed Bruce and Elinor into the comfortable hotel in Leeuwarden with a sparkle of expectation in her gray eyes.

The trip had been all that they could have wished. She had snapped off one film of her three rolls and gotten, she was convinced, such a unique collection of pictures as would eclipse any of the more usual photographs of Holland, for on the boat had been a number of peasant girls going home from a week-end excursion to Amsterdam and she had gotten, thanks to her portrait attachment, close views of their beautiful head-gear.

"I hope the Ballingers are in," said Elinor as they waited for Bruce to register and make inquiries. "I've gotten infected with Bruce's new spirit of hurry and I don't want to waste a minute of our precious time."

"I wonder if Hugo has a camera?" said Patricia, and then joined in the laugh against her mania for photography.

Bruce beckoned them to the desk. "Here's luck," he said, pointing to the register. "The Van Kelts are here, too, and the clerk tells me they are in."

Judith gave something between a shudder and a start of delight, but Elinor said briskly:

"We'll send up our cards, and after we've brushed and washed we'll have our reunion."

They hurried off to the roomy suite that Bruce extravagantly had secured for them for the night and made their preparations with such haste as they could.

There was a knock at the door of Patricia's room just as she had finished the last button of the lacy waist she had smuggled into her bag that morning in their rush from the Ryks Museum to the steamboat landing.

"Go see what it is, Ju, please," she asked, and Judith, with her most dignified air, flung the door ajar.

A uniformed porter with a tray stood respectfully while Judith took the cards.

"It's Hugo and his mother, Miss Pat," she said. "What shall I tell the man to say?"

"Why, that we'll be delighted to see them in the sitting-room as soon as they please," returned Patricia, very glad that Bruce's apartment had the advantages of a private salon. "Elinor sent word to the Van Kelts that we'd expect them in half an hour, and time's up right now. Come along, Judy, the porter knows the number better than we do. He'll show them up properly, you may be sure."

They found Elinor and Bruce waiting in the pretty salon, and as they entered Mrs. Van Kelt and Mr. William Van Kelt were announced.

Patricia found time to whisper to the stricken Judith, "Don't worry, Judy. Nothing bad is going to happen," and to catch her faint gasp of, "Oh, it *must* be dreadful, if *he's* come along to attend to it," before they were all shaking hands together and talking at once, just as though they were very old friends instead of being the casual acquaintances of a week.

"Where's Piet?" asked Elinor, to Judith's evident relief. She had been longing to ask, but dreaded some revelation of sinister import to the fortunes of Greycroft, and she listened with painful attention to the reply.

"He is coming as soon as he gets back from an errand," replied his mother. "He had only one film with him and he wanted to lay in a supply."

Patricia forgot Judith's anxiety in her own interest.

"Does he do that sort of thing, too?" she asked with animation. "He must have a wonderful collection—living here all the time."

"It is nothing to William's," replied Mrs. Van Kelt, smiling at her enthusiasm. "He has the finest pictures of the old villagers and their costumes in all Holland, I believe."

Bruce's eyes lighted at this and in spite of Patricia's hope that she might compare notes with Mr. William Van Kelt on the fascinating subject of photography, Bruce carried him off to his bedroom where he had left his color box and sketches, and she saw

no more of them till the Ballingers arrived and Elinor sent for them.

Both young men looked rather grave to her observant eyes when they came out into the gay little salon, but the sight of the sweet-faced Mrs. Ballinger and the friendly, honest countenance of Hugo swept the shadow from Bruce's manner, and made him quite his genial self again. Patricia forgot Mr. William in the interest of comparing notes with Hugo, but when she recalled him afterward she recollected that he seemed unusually grave and preoccupied.

"Well, everything seems to be cozy and comfortable here with you people," Hugo remarked lightly to Mr. William Van Kelt in a lull in the rapid chatter. "I hear that they had mighty lively times in Austria after the murder of Archduke Ferdinand. Randolph Landis, who was in Vienna then, said it was touch and go whether the Austrians wouldn't wallop little Servia for the job. But it's all settled down now. I suppose you heard a good bit about it, too."

"Yes, we had our moment of suspense," replied William Van Kelt gravely. "Rotterdam is the commercial pulse of this part of the world, you know, and financial circles feel the tug of war the first, but I hope it is over now."

Patricia did not know whether it was her imagination or not, but she fancied that he glanced at Bruce reassuringly as he said this.

"Yes," reiterated Hugo gleefully, "they had a mighty lively time. But the royalties are all off on their vacations now, so it looks a regular holiday for the dove of peace. William is off on his yacht, Nicholas is bumming around the coast of Finland with his family, Franz Joseph is in his summer house at Ischl and Poincaré is paying boat-calls in the Baltic. It's a cinch that good old Mr. H. Landis will lose his bet."

"What bet?" asked Elinor, idly.

"That there'll be wars and rumors of wars inside the year," replied Hugo with great enjoyment. "He's a great old boy, but he certainly is some croaker. Randolph stands to win in my humble opinion."

Patricia remembered that Mr. Stein was the great capitalist whose life Bruce had saved while painting his portrait in France last year, and she volunteered the information that Bruce knew one of the greatest financiers of Europe. "And he's tremendously fond of you, too, Bruce, or he wouldn't send——"

She stopped short at the look Bruce shot at her, and covered the break with a laughing wish to get a good snap shot of the renowned Stein.

Mr. Ballinger, who had been seeing after some delayed luggage, came in at this moment and made a fortunate diversion; and then Piet appeared with his films and the talk shifted to the plans for the next day, and Patricia forgot Bruce's grave face in the joy of anticipation.

"We'll get to Mrs. Nordhof's cousin's house about eleven," said Mrs. Van Kelt, rising to take leave. "She wants to see you entirely alone, my dear, so we will send you in the car, and you can meet us at the Museum. She will not keep you long, I know, and if we are to celebrate,

we can start in at once with a spin to Franeker and tea with a friend of ours in a nice old house there."

"Oh, would we have time?" asked Patricia, divided between the wish for that happy tomorrow to come and the dread lest she should disappoint them all in the trial of her voice with Madame Milano.

"It's on our way home, Miss Pat," prompted Judith in an undertone. "Don't you remember that we passed it in the train from Harlingen?"

"But you're not going off that way without seeing more of *us?*" exclaimed Hugo Ballinger in disgust. "We mayn't catch up to you again till Paris and the good old winter time. What's your hurry?"

He only grunted disapproval when they explained that the Jeremiah P. was waiting at Amsterdam to carry them through the villages of Holland in quest of subjects for Bruce's collection of costume studies.

"I'll bet he's got enough to last him till doomsday already, and he says himself that Mr. Van Kelt has about all he can hope to cabbage in a month of Sundays.

Why rush off from a good thing when you've got it? We nine people," here he included the Van Kelts with an engaging smile, "won't be in Leeuwarden again in our lives perhaps. Why not make a whole day of it at least?"

But Bruce shook his head.

"I'm sorry, my dear boy, but it can't be done. We've got to leave as soon as possible."

Patricia noticed that Mr. Van Kelt did not offer to dissuade them, but seemed to agree with Bruce's insistence on the need for haste.

"We were going to spend the day, but since you are anxious to get back to Amsterdam, perhaps my cousin would not object to starting immediately after luncheon," he said kindly. "There is plenty of room for you three in the car and we could take you on your way as far as Amersfoort, which is only about fifty minutes from Amsterdam, and will save the fatigue of retracing your journey of today."

Mrs. Van Kelt readily agreed and joined her persuasions to the plan and, in spite

of Hugo Ballinger's great dissatisfaction, it was arranged that they should set off in the big gray car as soon as luncheon had been disposed of, whether Miss Pat had been pronounced a musical possibility or not.

Patricia was well content with the plan, for she hoped to have Mr. William Van Kelt's expert advice on her photography, Bruce having steadily refused to "mix up in any more trouble of that sort" than he already had, and she said good-night to their guests with a hearty wish for the speedy coming of that eventful tomorrow.

Judith's face halted her as she shut the door after they had left Bruce and Elinor to further talk in the salon and gone sleepily to their ornate bedroom.

"What did Piet Van Kelt tell you about the book, Judy dear?" she asked, beginning to take the pins out of her hair. "You don't look half so scared as I expected you to."

Judith sighed. "Oh, it wasn't very bad," she said thoughtfully, dropping off one shoe. "It was the will, Patricia, after

all, but it doesn't hurt us at Greycroft at all. His cousin told him it wasn't worth a pin, just like Bruce said."

"But what was the will?" interrupted Patricia, impatiently. "If it affects us at all we ought to know."

Judith shook her head till her pale mane stood out. "It just says that he leaves his property and plate to his nephew in Holland, Piet Van Kelt, and as there isn't any plate or any property except Greycroft, which Aunt Louise's ancestor bought, why—there isn't anything to it."

"Well, what are you sighing for like a steam engine then?" demanded Patricia, standing over her in her determination to get at the bottom of her little sister's altered manner. "You aren't scared any more, but you look frightfully dismal. What is it that's worrying you?"

Judith raised her sad eyes, and Patricia saw in them the light that meant that Judith was enacting a pleasurable part.

"It isn't much," she said with a relish which Patricia was keen to detect. "It only means that when we are back in

America again, I'll have to begin to hunt for that silver, for it must be somewhere, you know. I've always wondered if it wasn't hidden in the little peak in the roof where you can't see for the roof of the storeroom—or perhaps it's in the orchard. They used to hide it that way, sometimes. Yes," she ended with another sigh of martyr-like proportions. "I guess I'll be terribly busy hunting for that silver. I'm glad we aren't going till next spring, though, for it would be horrid to dig in the winter time."

CHAPTER XVII

MADAME MILANO'S MUSIC ROOM

PATRICIA in the big gray car sped along the pleasant, dull streets of Leeuwarden with her heart beating like a trip-hammer.

"I do hope I won't break down," she said to herself, as she looked with absent eyes at the Orphanage and law courts as she flew past them on her way to the house where the prima donna was making her brief stay. "I shan't mind if I can just do my best, for then it won't be my fault if my voice isn't worth much. But if I'm shaky or hoarse from nervousness, I'd regret it to my dying day."

The Willemskade, the canal, and its delightful villas were so far from her thoughts that she started with genuine surprise when the car stopped and the chauffeur threw the door open for her to leave the car.

"Is this the place?" she asked with a tremor which she felt was very inexperienced and childish.

The man touched his cap and bowed, and so there was nothing for it but to get out with as good an air as possible and to wait while the door was opened by a ruddy Dutch maid and the necessary inquiries were made in Dutch by the respectful chauffeur, who was one of the hotel porters engaged for the hour of Patricia's trial by the thoughtful Mrs. Van Kelt, in case Patricia's homeward trip might not be a triumphant one.

Madame Milano was in and expecting the young lady, and Patricia followed the trim figure of the maid into the cheerful salon with a very dry throat and a growing fear of imminent breakdown.

The kindly Mrs. Nordhof bustled out to meet her and at the sight of her pleasant Teutonic face, Patricia's spirits rose. The lump that had begun to choke her subsided and she was able to reply easily to her hostess' inquiries about her trip to Leeu-

warden and even to begin to be impatient for the interview.

"I shall take you at once to Madame Milano," said Mrs. Nordhof, rising and leading the way to a great shining wooden door. "It is best to have these things over, is it not, my dear? I remember how I felt when I first sang for my master in Berlin, I had to wait an hour and I was so hoarse from fright that I couldn't reach half my register. Norna is the kindest soul in the world, and you mustn't feel agitated in the least."

A rich voice responded to her knock, and Patricia was ushered into a big bare music room wherein was nothing but a grand piano and a long wooden stool. The sunshine flooded the waxed floor and one of the great windows stood ajar as though someone had just come hurriedly in from the garden whose flowers scented the fresh air.

By the piano stood a small plump woman in white. Her brown eyes were large and liquid and Patricia recognized her from the photographs she had seen of the famous singer.

"So this is your young friend, Minna darling?" she said, moving gracefully forward. "I am very glad indeed to meet you, my dear. Minna tells me you are fond of music."

Patricia, in her gratitude for the cordiality of the greeting, lost her last trace of diffidence and, worshipping at the shrine of this new divinity, plunged into an unembarrassed account of her musical aspirations, while the wise Mrs. Nordhof slipped away to await the outcome of the interview in her cheerful salon.

Madame Milano kept her busy for about ten minutes, not so much with her history as with her musical preferences, and Patricia was so lost in the joy of pouring out her soul to one who had attained in the world of which she longed to be a part that she forgot to wonder at the great lady's sociability.

"Now, we will sing," said Madame Milano, suddenly swooping down on the long stool. "I will sing first and then you. It is a good arrangement, do you think?" and she flung a laughing look over

her broad shoulder at Patricia. "It is to be that little song of Chaminade which you say you know. Very simple, yes, but serviceable. We will now begin."

She sang the song exquisitely, showing Patricia how much could be done with it, and then pushed a sheet towards her with a pretty gesture of impatience.

"I do not use the notes, but you?" she questioned, and a smile of approval came to her red lips when Patricia, disdaining the sheet, and with her heart filled with the melody, threw her bright head high and sang the simple song with all her soul.

"You can sing it again?" Madame Milano asked, when she had finished.

Patricia wondered, but the glow of that rare performance of the singer's was fresh as before, and she sang the "Silver Ring" through to the last notes with even fuller comprehension of the possibility of its melodic quality.

As the last note died to its lingering finish, the singer whirled about and startled Patricia with a smart slap on the shoulder.

"You will do very well," she said, with a nod of her dark head. "Go and get older for a winter, and then study. I will tell Minna where it is best for you to go. Now I am busy, and I must be excused. I am glad you 'make good,' as you Americans say. Farewell; mind the door—it has a spring," and she had Patricia out of the music room and into the darker hallway before a word of thanks was possible.

Patricia stumbled into Mrs. Nordhof on the threshold of the salon, and her face told the story for her.

"I thought you were not going to come out right," said Mrs. Nordhof, beaming her relief. "I have never known Norna to be so long. What did she say about studying?"

Patricia told her every word, not omitting the cordial stamp of approval on her shoulder, and she ended with a sigh of intense admiration.

"I think she's lovely," she said ardently. "She is so nice and pleasant—just like anybody else. I always thought great

people were terribly—well, stuck up and self-satisfied, you know, but she is more sociable even than the teacher at the Prison, and she was an awfully poor sort."

Mrs. Nordhof wanted to hear about the Prison and so Patricia gave her a brief account of their years in the boarding school and then of their coming to Greycroft and the finding of Francis-David and the final establishment of him as their brother.

"He's to meet us on Thursday at Alkmaar, and I wish you knew him," she said, carried away as usual by her love for her twin. "Frad isn't terribly clever, but he's the dearest thing. I'd like to bring him to see you if I might when we come back this way. He'd love to hear you sing."

Mrs. Nordhof responded cordially and was about to put some further questions about his studies in the University when the clock on the chimney-piece chimed out a silvery *twelve*.

"Mercy, I've kept you a dreadfully long time!" cried Patricia in swift contrition. "Mrs. Van Kelt told me you were leaving

for Bremen this afternoon with Madame Milano. What a *pig* you must think me."

To her surprise Mrs. Nordhof took her glowing face between her hands and kissed her in hearty Dutch fashion first on one pink cheek and then on the other.

"I have been glad, *glad* to hear you talk of your brother and home," she said in a low tone. "I used to have a little sister who was like you—" she broke off without saying any more, and Patricia, much moved, stood silently waiting for her to compose herself.

She ran her smooth white hand over her eyes and turned to Patricia with a smile.

"Tell our friends the Van Kelts that we are sorry not to see them again today," she said, ringing the bell for the maid. "But in the fall we shall all gather once again, God willing. Give my love to your pretty sister and say I hope to see you all in Paris this winter if we do not meet before."

Patricia bade her a grateful good-bye and hurried after the rosy-cheeked maid,

The big front door was flung open for her, and she ran lightly down the steps.

"To the Museum," she said to the chauffeur with a host of delightful pictures of her triumphant descent upon her anxious family rising before her as she drove swiftly through the sleepy streets.

"I wish I could fool them just for a minute," she said, sighing and sinking luxuriously back in the cushions as the strain of her past excitement began to assert itself. "But I know I look too outrageously happy to hide it for the fraction of a second."

CHAPTER XVIII

BACK TO AMSTERDAM

TO Patricia, Leeuwarden always remained an enchanted spot. She insisted that it was the most interesting city in Holland to her merely because it was the ancient Friesland capital, and declared that their early treaty with Charlemagne had long ago made her respect them above all the other states in the Netherlands.

"They are the only Dutch who have really never been conquered for a single moment," she said as the town faded into the golden distance behind them on their swift journey to Meppel. "And the girls are prettier here than in any place I have seen yet."

"It's the head-dress that makes them look so well," put in Elinor. "I am simply transformed by that gold helmet that Bruce got this morning. You ought to

see me, Miss Pat, I look like another person."

"Oh, did Bruce get any costumes?" asked Patricia eagerly. "I wish I'd have known he was going to buy things, I did so want one of those gilt helmets, and I never thought of it while we were there."

"You didn't have much time, did you?" said Mrs. Van Kelt. "After you descended upon us at the Museum like a herald of good tidings, I think we all forget the peasantry of Friesland."

"Herald of good tidings?" laughed Bruce. "More like a blazing comet, I should say. Did you ever see any one more lit up?"

"I was so anxious about that time that I couldn't have forgiven her if she hadn't announced it to us in that first glance," said Mrs. Van Kelt warmly. "Her face was the most satisfactory thing in Leeuwarden to me at that moment."

"We were all pretty well worked up, I fancy," said Bruce. "I thought they were letting the poor kid down easy—comforting her with cakes and wine perhaps—or that she had fainted by the way-

side and Hendrik the noble-hearted porter was bringing her to before restoring her to her stricken family."

The others laughed at his extravagance, but Judith turned reproachful eyes on him. She was sitting on the other sliding seat opposite to Patricia and she reached a hand across to squeeze Patricia's with a reassuring pressure.

"*I* wasn't at all worked up, as Bruce calls it. I *knew* that you would succeed, Miss Pat. There isn't anybody who can sing like you can—like a lovely soaring angel—and I wasn't afraid you'd fail."

Quick tears sprang to Patricia's big gray eyes. The verdict of Madame Milano and the kind words of Mrs. Nordhof had failed to move her as these simple words of faithful love from her inexperienced little sister.

"Dear Judy," she whispered, with a tender look, "I'll never disappoint you if I can help it. I'll remember what you've said when I'm going to get scared and I know it will help me to sing better than I ever did before."

Judith's pale face glowed. She leaned forward to speak confidentially while the others behind them went on with their talk of Patricia's future.

"You see, we've all simply *got* to succeed," she said firmly. "Elinor's begun, and that's right, as she's the oldest. You're next and you've got to go on as splendidly as you can, for there's still *me*, you know, and I may not turn out to be so awfully clever as you think, and we've got to keep up the average in the family, you know."

"Bless her heart, what ideas she does get!" laughed Patricia, whisking away the tears and giving the thin little hand an earnest pressure. "You must have been reading some new sort of books lately, Ju dear, to have such queer notions. Don't feel that way about it, goosie. You can't do anything worth while if you're trying to get through with it, don't you know that? You have to *love* it better than anything else in the world, and then—it just does itself."

"Ahem!" coughed Bruce ostentatiously. "Might we call the attention of the gifted

gallery to the fact that we have yet to decide on the main points of our day's run, to speak nautically. Mrs. Van Kelt has invited us to spend the night at Utrecht and run into Amsterdam early in the morning."

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Patricia. "Do let's go, please."

"Oh, *please!*" echoed Judith with such an intense accent that it was instantly agreed on to accept the kind invitation, and Mrs. Van Kelt declared it was simply selfishness on her part that made her wish to keep them with her little party as long as she could, since she had never had more enthusiastic guests or ones who were more in sympathy with the country and its history.

"Our Hollow-land is very dear to us, you know, and some of our friends from abroad do not appreciate it so much," she said with a gentle smile. "We of the Low Countries love its old customs and ancient costumes, even though some think us unprogressive and old-fashioned."

"Unprogressive!" exclaimed Elinor.

"You surely can't think that! Paris is far behind you in everyday conveniences as I found when I spent a couple of days there in June."

"Where are we going to stop for dinner?" asked Judith, who was eager to map out her route firmly in her mind, so as to remember it clearly for the inexhaustible diary. "Are we going right on to Utrecht? I wish I'd read more about it——"

"Don't worry about that," said Mr. Van Kelt, smiling back at his cousin. "What one of us doesn't know the other no doubt can tell you, for, as Pauline says, we're fiends on Dutch history, only we don't let the average outsider see how deluded we are. Besides, we're going to dine before we get that far, and, if we don't have a puncture or some other breakdown, there will be time enough for Miss Patricia to get a shot at the Sassen-poort and some other of Zwolle's attractions."

He had slowed down for a hay cart to pass as he spoke, but when they were clear of the cart, he put on the gas again and turned his attention to the machine.

"What is the Sassen-poort?" asked Judith of Piet, leaning over to speak above the throb of the engine.

"Don't know," replied Piet with agreeable indifference, but Mr. Van Kelt heard the question and answered over his shoulder.

"Fine old Gothic gateway. Four towers, with a pond and reflections," he flung, more to Patricia than Judith, and Patricia instantly responded to the suggestion.

"Oh, I hope I can get a good picture of it," she said. "I've only got half a film left now."

"We'll stock up in Utrecht," said Bruce, overhearing the tail of her remark. "There will be plenty of snaps to be had tomorrow morning on the way home, and I want to make the most of my time now."

Patricia screwed her neck to look at him.

"You're getting to be a perfect fiend for time," she said with a tinge of reproach. "Ever since we got to Amsterdam you've thought of nothing but hustling ahead. It's not a bit like you, Bruce. What's the matter with you?"

Bruce merely laughed and replied that he

was always in a hurry when he had real business on hand, and then turned the talk to the country through which they were passing, giving Mrs. Van Kelt her opportunity for descanting on her beloved fatherland.

At Meppel they stopped long enough, too, for the two photographers to get a few shots of the little town, and then on they flew in the golden afternoon, through a succession of charming villages with red-tiled roofs, sweet green fields with corn and hayricks gleaming in the sun, and an occasional sturdy peasant driving a quaint cart along the vitrified brick of the roadway.

"Yes, it is a pleasant country," replied Mrs. Van Kelt in answer to an exclamation from Bruce. "I am sorry you have to hurry through it, but William has some fine pictures of the canals around Meppel and Kampen which I am sure he would be glad to let you have prints of. He told me last night he was going to get a duplicate of his costume collection for you as soon as we got home."

Bruce and Elinor both exclaimed at this,

but when Mrs. Van Kelt added that William was deeply interested in the subject himself and felt that he would be helping to stimulate an interest in accurate reproductions of Dutch costumes, they gave in gratefully.

"William is much exercised over the prints that other countries make of our peasantry," she said. "They seem to think that a cap and a pair of klumpen make a Dutch peasant, no matter what province they are supposed to come from. We are grateful to anyone who will correct such errors, and want to help all we can."

"Really, Bruce, it hardly seems necessary to explore this particular part of the country again in the slow old Jeremiah P.," said Elinor as they slowed down at the hotel at Zwolle. "We might cut this out of our plan and take more time to the places we haven't had even a glimpse of. It is getting on towards August now, and we really are limited, if we are to get to Paris as early as we planned."

Patricia thought Bruce looked at her oddly as he replied, but as he was struggling with the door of the car, which stuck at that

moment, she fancied once again that her imagination was to blame.

"I don't believe it *will* be worth while, my dear," he said, as he held out his hand for Mrs. Van Kelt. "In fact, I'm pretty sure we won't visit this part of the world again this summer."

They left Judith, Elinor and Mrs. Van Kelt at the hotel to order dinner and freshen up while they sped off to the Sassen-poort, where Bruce and Patricia took various views of the old brick gateway, flushed with the low sun, and reflected in the quiet water among its trees. Then they went back to dine enjoyably on a typical Dutch meal of many meats, taking up their way again in the late beams of the sunset.

The long stretch from Zwolle to Ameersfoort fled by with incredible swiftness, for both Patricia and Judith had become infected with Bruce's feverish desire to make the most of every moment and with this feeling in their minds the flitting meadows and canals and villages were too absorbing for much talk.

Utrecht stood out against a sky of pure

gold as they slipped into its busy streets, and before the car came to a halt at the club Mrs. Van Kelt had just time to tell Judith of the first Friesian church, founded here in the fifth century, whose bishops was St. Willobred and which had been the beginning of that powerful religious fraternity which dictated to the rulers of the sixteenth century, and that it was here that the independence of the Netherlands was established by the union of the seven provinces under Count John of Nassau, the brother to the revered Silent Prince.

They went to see what they could of the famous view of Holland from the cathedral tower in the twilight, and they all declared—after they had gotten safely down the four hundred and thirty-eight steps which was the price of that view—that it was well worth the toil.

A stroll on the ramparts overlooking the shimmering water wherein were reflected many flashing lights as the town grew dark with the night, and coffee in an out-of-door café where the music delighted Patricia, ended their evening and they went back to

the comfortable hotel in the Janskerhof well pleased with their unexpected visit to Utrecht.

They were none the less pleased the next morning when, after a leisurely breakfast at an incredibly early hour, they set off through the streets of this most ancient town in the Netherlands.

Judith had been unnaturally quiet since starting and when they were clear of the town and spinning along the open country with the morning mist lifting in the golden sunshine, she fumbled among the rugs at her feet and she suddenly turned to Patricia with a bulky package.

"I didn't forget that you paid my tips for me, Miss Pat," she said, with an excited toss of her mane. "I've been saving up and I got the thing I thought you'd like best."

Patricia gasped with surprise and pleasure when she opened the neat parcel and saw the rather astonishing pile of neat yellow cardboard boxes.

"What a lot of films!" she cried rapturously. "Judy Kendall, how did you do it?"

Judith was much gratified with the success of her surprise.

"I got them last night while you were off taking pictures," she said. "And I spent just as much as I owed you, Miss Pat. Isn't there a lot of them?"

"Perfectly heavenly," sighed Patricia luxuriously. "I oughtn't to take them, of course, but I do *so* need them, and I'm just about broke. You've paid me a thousand times for those old tips, Ju. I didn't mind not handing out myself, when I saw how badly you felt about it."

Judith's pleasure in her restitution deepened when she learned that Patricia had given up her own tips to save her feelings.

"I wish they were fifty more," she exclaimed energetically. "I do, indeed, Miss Pat."

"Heaven forbid!" laughed Patricia. "I'd have to hire a porter to take them. But just watch me snap up the points of interest from now on."

They took pictures at Hilversum and Naarden and Muiden, and with a jumble of forest trees and open canals, cozy farm-

houses with red-cheeked girls scouring the great brass milk-cans, and miles of roses and lilies and sunny meadows whirling together in their eager minds, they swept into Amsterdam just as the chimes were ringing out the hour of ten.

The Dam was crowded with the busy throngs that they had found so interesting on the Monday before, and Patricia found it easier to say good-bye to their kind friends in the midst of the bustle of the city than had seemed possible earlier in the morning among the sunny fields and in the good comradeship of the roadway.

Mrs. Van Kelt made them promise to send her word when they returned to Amsterdam again from their painting trip to the north and they parted with great cordiality, feeling that the old miser of Greycroft had been the means of securing to them a very real friendship and that they owed Judith a debt of gratitude for her love of unraveling plots.

"I wonder what you'll find to puzzle over next, Judy dear?" said Elinor as they strolled about the square, admiring the Exchange and the Nieuwe Kerk while they

waited for Bruce to make a visit to Stein and Hoorn in search of letters and papers from home.

"Don't know," said Judith indifferently, looking at the stately building. "Isn't it funny that they let the boys play in the Exchange for a whole week each year? Piet says he knows a boy here who had such fun there last year."

"In the Exchange?" said Patricia incredulously. "What in the world do they do that for?"

"Piet said that long ago the boys heard the Spanish soldiers making up a plot to wreck the city and they told, and ever since once a year they play here to remember it by."

"How nice," began Patricia, when her attention was attracted by Bruce's approach.

He looked very serious indeed and although he gave no reason for his altered expression, and Elinor was too much absorbed in her letters from Hannah Ann and Mrs. Halden to notice his anxious look, Patricia became vaguely alarmed.

"Is anything the matter, Bruce?" she asked him in a low tone, as they crossed Kalver Straat to the shop where they left their films for development. "I wish you'd tell me. You know I can keep a secret."

Bruce looked at her for a hesitating moment and then he smiled reassuringly.

"I'll tell you if there's any need of it, Miss Pat," he said kindly. "Don't worry your pretty head about things till you have to."

So far from being reassured, Patricia took instant alarm.

"*Do* tell me," she urged. "Has anything happened to Frad? Or is it Greycroft?"

Bruce shook his head. "Neither, my dear," he replied earnestly. "Be a good little girl and if you can help me in any way, be sure I'll call on you. Now we must find Hans and make ready for Zaandam and Alkmaar."

Elinor came out of her letters with a start.

"Are we going right on without seeing Amsterdam?" she asked in surprise. "I thought we were to spend a couple of days here."

Patricia quickly came to Bruce's rescue, though she did not know his purpose in his change of plans.

"Frad is going to meet us at Alkmaar," she said. "And after all the gadding about we've had, I guess Bruce wants some time to paint."

"Of course," cried Elinor. "How stupid of me to forget the real reason for our being here."

Bruce threw Patricia a grateful look.

"We'll get under way at once," he said. "I left word for the films to be sent to us at Alkmaar. Come, children, the hours are flitting and the taxi waits."

CHAPTER XIX

STARTLING NEWS

"ARE they every one spoiled, Miss Pat?" asked Judith in an anxious tone.

They were on the deck of the Jeremiah P. and the shadows of the twilight were closing in about them as Hans put the sturdy barge into motion, breaking up the mirrored picture of the canal at Alkmaar into a thousand pieces.

Bruce had just brought in the mail and Patricia was examining the films and prints which had been forwarded to her from Amsterdam. A distressing collection of blanks occupied the most important of the Leeuwarden collection.

Patricia stared at them ruefully.

"I don't see how I did it," she said dolefully. "I think those films must have been defective. And, oh, look at this! I've only taken *half* of Elinor at the

Museum door! Isn't it too mean for words!"

Judith puckered her brows over the rather amazing array of distorted buildings and dim figures.

"I suppose you must have done *something*, though, Miss Pat, that wasn't just right," she urged politely. "Bruce used to take very good pictures with that same camera, you know."

Patricia frowned. "I'll study it up in the book I got in Amsterdam, I suppose," she said vindictively. "I hate these stupid things that have to be treated just so."

"What's the trouble?" asked Bruce, looking up from his pile of papers. His own prints were unopened and Patricia wondered at his indifference to the fascinations of photography.

He took the camera from Patricia's willing hand and examined it with an air of patient endurance that surprised Patricia.

"There it is," he pointed out, with no smile for her comical dismay. "You've simply forgotten to use the focuser and when the things happened to be within

your range, they took, and when they didn't—" he finished with a shrug.

Judith could not repress a laugh at Patricia's rueful face.

"Never mind, Miss Pat," she comforted her. "You know how to do it now, and there'll be lots more nice things to take. We have a whole week to spend in Amsterdam, you know. Elinor says she wants to take her time, once we get back there. May I show her your prints?"

Patricia groaned consent and Judith sped off with the appalling mass of failures.

The crescent moon was dipping into the waters of the canal before them and Patricia, in spite of herself, was entranced with the beauty of the scene. Suddenly Bruce spoke.

His voice was low and earnest, and Patricia felt that same vague sense of alarm that she had felt on the Kalver Straat when they had hurried off to find Hans and start on the painting trip to Zaandam and Alkmaar.

"Would you like to help me, Miss Pat?" he asked.

Patricia's ready response seemed to satisfy him, and he went on hurriedly.

"We shall have to go home at any time now, and I want you to make it seem a desirable change of plan. I hate to break up our trip, but it has to come sooner or later, and we might as well be on the safe side and go comfortably."

A swift fear shot through Patricia's mind and she caught his arm.

"Oh, Bruce, it hasn't anything to do with that horrid dagger, has it?" she gasped.

He almost laughed at her distress. "No, indeed, not a shred of a connection with Selim Bey," he assured her. "It's nothing that any of us can help, and you mustn't worry over it. All I want you to do is to try to get the girls into the humor for home, so that they won't be too much jolted when I spring it on them."

Patricia wonderingly promised, and Bruce added kindly:

"You've a lot of unconscious influence over those sisters of yours, I can tell you, Patricia Louise Kendall, and I know you're

trump enough to stand by me for all you are worth. Shake hands on it and don't let them suspect you. I'll tell you more perhaps tomorrow."

Patricia shook hands readily enough.

"But, Bruce," she said, her brow puckering, "how about Francis-David? He'll be here soon, won't he? And then we'll be gone, and he will wonder——"

"I cabled him last week," said Bruce. "He won't be apt to hunt for us in Holland this year."

Patricia, in the two days that they idled along the pleasant canal while Bruce labored prodigiously, often wondered at his cool manner, but she stuck to the task he had given her, talking so much of Greycroft in the glories of its August beauty that Elinor grew almost homesick, and Judith at last openly rebelled at the thought of the lovely old house without its proper tenants.

"If Mrs. Shelly were over there I'd rather be home than any place in the world," she said as they idled over the luncheon on the shady deck. "I've seen lots of things and I don't believe it's going

to be much fun at that boarding school in Paris anyway. Piet Van Kelt says he wouldn't go to school in Paris if you'd hire him."

"Think of all the wonderful things you are going to see," said Elinor rather feebly. "You've no idea how attractive Paris is, Judy dear."

"It's cold and drizzly in winter," retorted Judith with unexpected resentment against the gay metropolis. "I know I shan't have half so good a time as last winter while you girls went to the Academy. I don't care half so much about the Ballingers as you do and the Parokeets simply ignore me, and the Spicers won't stay in Paris all the time like we shall have to, and Miss Pat isn't going to study after all—and—and I simply want to go home."

Here, much to Patricia's dismay, for she had not counted on so easy a harvest of her sowing, Judith flung herself into Elinor's arms and burst into a flood of tears.

Bruce lowered his head to throw a grateful glance at the guilty Patricia.

"What a homesick kitten," he said,

gently patting her heaving shoulders. "You've spoiled her at Greycroft, I'm afraid, and nothing else will satisfy her."

Judith sat up, sobbing out an indignant protest.

"It isn't that and you all know it," she cried through her tears. "It's just because —because—it's the only home we've ever had, and no place else is half so nice."

Elinor looked puzzled at Bruce's light manner, when he gave Judith's blonde hair a tweak and said briskly:

"In that case, Judy machree, we'll have to see what can be done for you. I'll talk it over with Elinor, while you girls hunt up that apple-cheeked damsel with the embroidered waist. You remember where she lives, don't you, Miss Pat?" he asked, turning to Patricia. "The house is only about ten minutes' walk from here."

Patricia nodded. She felt that there was something more serious under Bruce's light manner than any of them guessed, but since he chose to keep his own councils she was satisfied to take the note he struck. So she answered gayly enough:

"Of course I do. Who could ever forget that adorable mossy roof with the red tiles peeping out from the green and the bright little windows with their lace curtains winking in the sun? Judy and I will get the waist for you, if it's to be got, you may be sure. Come along, Ju, your eyes are all right. Nobody will see you anyway till we get to the farm."

Judith, still sniffing dismally, allowed herself to be taken briskly off and it was not long before the sunshine and Patricia's infectious gayety, together with the agreeable excitement of executing Bruce's commission, made her forget her homesickness and chatter in her usual confidential manner with Patricia.

"I do hope she won't have the waist on today," she said as they reached the klinker road that ran past the farm-house on its way to the village. "It would be so embarrassing to ask her to sell it off her back."

"Don't fear for that," returned Patricia promptly. "You haven't had your eyes about you if you think any Dutch girl

would be so mad as to wear her best clothes every day. She was going to that wedding at Wormermeer, no doubt—they were all tremendously dressed up, you know. I only hope she's gotten back this afternoon. It would be so flat to have to go back without seeing her."

Their fears were set at rest, however, as soon as they came in sight of the farmhouse, for there beside the sloat which ran in place of a fence between the door-yard and the adjoining field, was the girl, down on her knees scrubbing an array of wooden shoes in the clear water of the sloat while a number of the beautiful brass milk-cans stood behind her waiting their turn to be cleansed.

At sight of her, Judith was seized with a fit of shyness.

"You go ahead, Miss Pat," she whispered. "I sort of hate to go ask her for her Sunday clothes, it seems so bold and *mercenarious*."

Patricia giggled heartlessly. "You ought to be hardened to it by this time," she said, crossing the road. "Bruce has been at it ever since we started out on the Jeremiah

P. She won't mind a bit. Probably she's dying for a chance to get some nice new machine-made blouses from New York or Chicago."

The red-cheeked girl proved as amiable as Patricia had prophesied, for when they by gradual degrees stated their errand, she smiled with delight and, wiping her red hands on her spotless apron, she ran into the house and brought out the coveted waist for them to examine in daylight.

Judith was horrified at the manner in which Patricia chaffered for this beautiful garment and stood like an image of polite but restrained disapproval while Patricia turned the blouse inside out and upside down, slowly examining every seam and scallop in the manner she had seen the peasants themselves overhaul any garment they wished to purchase.

The girl, however, seemed not at all disconcerted. Indeed, her opinion of Patricia seemed to rise as that critical young lady pointed out every tiny flaw in the careful stitches and blur of color in the heavenly blue of the material.

The minutes flew by in misery to Judith, as no mention of the price had been made by either of the deeply interested parties to the bargain, and all sorts of objections had been raised by Patricia, only to be met and confuted by the ardent broken English of the broadly smiling girl.

"Oh, I wish they wouldn't keep it up so long," thought Judith uneasily. "I don't believe she'll let us have it a cent cheaper, anyway, and Elinor will think we're lost."

Hay carts laden with golden wisps went lumbering by. Children ran home from infant school. The minister of the Kerk in the village passed, nodding a greeting to the girl, and still Patricia and the owner of the waist gabbled agreeably, each apparently as much diverted as the other.

Judith watched the broad black back of the minister dwindle in the distance, and then she turned with a start.

"Bruce is coming!" she exclaimed. "Do make haste, Miss Pat!"

Patricia, looking up, saw the hurrying figure, and her heart sank. A sudden fear blotted out the brightness of the day.

"All right, Ju," she answered evenly enough, "I'll be ready in a minute."

Patricia never forgot the tense anxiety of that moment, and she never afterwards saw the blouse among the treasures of Bruce's studio without a little thrill at the memory of the dread that surged over her at the sight of his hurrying figure.

She swiftly named a price at which the girl eagerly nodded, and the bargain was made. Pouring the gulden in the girl's red hand, she caught up the blouse again and with a hasty good-bye flew off along the road to meet Bruce.

"Oh, what is it?" she asked breathlessly as they met half way. "Is Elinor hurt? Is——"

Bruce looked his surprise at her agitation. "Of course not, you emotional young critter," he said, falling into step with them and setting off at a brisk pace. "Nothing distressing has happened. We are all safe and sound on the Jeremiah P. But we've suddenly decided to go home, and we're packing up. You two bargain hunters were so unconscionably long that—"

"Packing up?" cried Patricia amazed at the swiftness of the move. "What in the world are we doing that for?"

"We are going to sail from Rotterdam tomorrow morning," said Bruce. "And we have to hustle, I can tell you."

"But your paintings?" cried Patricia. "Your studies for the mural decoration?"

"I've about everything in that line I need now, thanks to Van Kelt's photographs," he said. "I got a lot of costumes coming to me from Friesland, you know, as Hugo Ballinger promised to ship them on to me. Hans will take the boat back to Middleburg and everything will go like clockwork."

"You can't mean that you're giving up your trip just because you think I'm homesick," suddenly broke out Judith. "I'm not such an outrageous baby as all that, I hope. I'd die rather than spoil your plans, Bruce. And I'm not so awfully crazy to go home, anyway. I didn't really want to until I heard Miss Pat talk so much about it."

Bruce only laughed and tweaked her hair.

"Too late to retract now, Judy," he said gayly, "we've gone and went and done it, and you've got to go, too."

"I believe Miss Pat is at the bottom of it," said Judith thoughtfully. "She's been preaching patriotism and home for all she is worth ever since—ever since—why, it was only *yesterday!*"

Patricia felt a wave of guilty color sweep over her face, but, true to her compact with Bruce, she did not deny the accusation.

Bruce flung her a grateful look.

"Well, we'll leave it on her shoulders till tomorrow, at all events," he said lightly. "Now, let's get on. We've piles of work ahead of us, and Elinor can't do it by herself."

Judith stopped still. "But, Bruce, how about Francis-David?" she asked. "We've forgotten all about him."

Bruce shook his head.

"Oh, no, my dear Judy, we haven't," he replied. "I cabled Francis-David last week to wait in New York till he heard from us, and I sent him word this morning that we were sailing on the 'Landam' tomorrow."

"Last week?" echoed Judith, frowning thoughtfully. "We were in Amsterdam last week. And that's why he didn't meet us in Alkmaar as he promised. How very funny."

CHAPTER XX

HOMEWARD BOUND

"DO you know, Miss Pat, I never dreamed you'd be so selfish as to break up our trip this way," said Judith as they stood by the rail of the steamer in Rotterdam the next afternoon, while they waited for their final farewells to the Van Kelts, who were approaching with Bruce and Elinor from the wharf.

Patricia said nothing and Judith went on hastily, with her eyes fixed on the crowd of varied nationality on the quay.

"Not that I'm not awfully glad, now that we're really going," she said, edging close enough to slip her hand in Patricia's arm. "I'm terribly glad, Miss Pat, and I know I'll keep on getting gladder and gladder all the time till we are in the dear old library at Greycroft."

Patricia still silent, she went on with kindling eyes: "And it's so lovely to have

such a mysterious way of ending our splendid trip. I almost hope Bruce doesn't tell us very soon, for it's such fun to try to guess what his reason is. Don't you love mysteries, and plots, Miss Pat?"

Patricia shook her head with a very positive gesture.

"No, I don't," she said firmly. "And I'm never going to stick even the end of my little finger into any if I can help it. I like good, plain, every-day doings, and that's the only thing about going home that I don't like—the mystery of it——"

"Why, I thought you knew it all!" cried Judith in surprise. "I thought you and Bruce were conspirators——"

"What's that?" called Bruce's voice, coming from behind them unexpectedly. "What's that about conspirators?"

"Judy thinks I'm in the plot to drag them home," said Patricia resentfully. Her mind was in revolt against secrecy and she felt that the hour of her promised helpfulness was drawing to a close.

Bruce patted her shoulder. "Come along and say your farewells to the Van Kelts,

Miss Pat," he said soothingly, ignoring her appeal. "They've brought you some dandy souvenirs of Rotterdam, and the bugles are soon to blow to clear the decks."

The Van Kelts were full of regret for the sudden departure, for which, Patricia noticed, no adequate explanation had been given them, and when they left the boat and hurried down the gang-plank to the quay, Elinor looked after them with regretful eyes.

"I do hope we shall meet them soon again," she said, putting the flowers they had left in such profusion to her face and reveling in the sweetness. "I never felt more indebted to a dead and gone relic than to that old miser of Judith's, and I, for one, don't mean to let the friendship drop."

Judith sighed ostentatiously. "I guess I'll remember them the most," she said plaintively, "for I've got to hunt for that old silver, and I suppose I'll have to dig all over the place before I find it."

The steamer began to move and the crowd on the wharf waved its many handkerchiefs and cheered as the big boat swung out into the channel.

The passengers on the "Landam" responded, and then as the city began to recede into the distance and the figures of the wharf faded into a line of indistinguishable color, Elinor turned to Bruce.

"We've been very good, Bruce dear, and we haven't bothered you with questions, for we knew you must have some very good reason for hurrying off home this way," she said, tucking her arm through his as they all stood watching the towers of Rotterdam grow dim against the sky. "But we really would like to know why. Can't you tell us now?"

Bruce hesitated for a moment.

"Come into our stateroom, all of you," he said seriously. "I'd rather not be overheard."

Judith caught Patricia's hand as they scampered down the companionway.

"Isn't it nice and thrilly?" she whispered eagerly. "I never knew Bruce could be so interesting and *inperspicuous*, did you?"

In the cozy stateroom Bruce told them briefly of his messages from Stein, and the matter of their changed plans.

"I am going home because of those messages," he said, "and because I know that Stein with his wonderful opportunities has knowledge of affairs that never reach the outside world. He sent me word in Amsterdam to get ready to leave Europe if I cared for the comfort of my women folks."

"The idea! How funny!" broke from Judith, but she instantly silenced herself, and Bruce went on.

"I sent word to the Spicers and they are leaving from Havre today, but I had no authority to let the Ballingers or the LeGrandes have the advantage of my knowledge. So they will have to take their chances. It may not spread so rapidly as Stein fears, but it is bound to come soon."

"But what is it?" cried the three girls in a breath. "What in the world is it?"

Bruce faced them solemnly.

"Tomorrow," he said impressively, "tomorrow Austria will declare war on Servia and all of Europe will be in a tumult. War, terrible wholesale war and ruin, will run riot in the pleasant places where we had planned to spend our winter, and

famine and pestilence will stalk beside them."

Patricia shuddered and covered her eyes.

"Oh, Bruce, is it so bad as that?" she cried. "I can't think it will be so bad as that."

"The whole of Europe will be involved," replied Bruce soberly. "It's been a long time coming and it has lost nothing for the waiting. We are well out of it, my dears, and I thank Stein from the bottom of my heart for his warning. You three and the Spicers at least are safe, no matter what happens."

The news of the great calamity that was brooding over the cities where they had planned to spend their peaceful fall and winter days shocked and dazed them. It seemed incredible that destruction should come on such swift wings to the smiling country that they were leaving.

"We must not say anything of this until the news gets out," said Bruce as they went on deck again. "It is a secret which is to be guarded out of gratitude to Stein."

As they stood at the rail again, looking

back at the retreating line of the shores, Patricia felt a keen stab of regret for her hasty farewells to the kind Van Kelts.

"I wish I'd thanked Mrs. Van Kelt again," she said remorsefully. "I can't study in Paris in the spring, I suppose, and I may never see them again."

"Holland will be neutral," Bruce told her, and she sighed in quick relief at the assurance that the peaceful canals and sunny, misty meadows of the Low Country should not feel the desolation and horror of war.

"To think of it," she mused, with her chin sunken on the rail. "Sunshine and comfort and plenty now, and perhaps in a little while the cannon will be booming and the besiegers attacking, just like it was in those old days of the Spanish invasion."

"Well, there's one thing certain," said Judith with her head high, "and that is, if those Dutchmen do go into war, they won't be beaten any more easily than they were at Leyden when they fought in the flooded orchards in the night."

There was a long silence, as they were busy

with their own thoughts, and then Bruce said simply:

"God be with them in whatever may come to pass and make the right to triumph as it did in the old days."

Patricia whispered a low amen and then she drew a deep breath.

"Oh, how thankful we ought to be that it isn't our dear country!" she cried, with a thrill of intense gratitude in her voice. "Our home shall not be left desolate——"

"No, indeed," broke in Judith vigorously. "And I'm so terribly thankful, too, that there are so many, many miles of wet, wet water between us, aren't you, Elinor? It seems absolutely providential that we were born Americans instead of being foreign *Europeaners*, doesn't it?"

She tossed her head at the laugh that greeted this outburst.

"I don't care if you do laugh," she flashed at them. "I guess we'll all be pretty happy in nice old Rockham, with all that we shall have to do. Bruce has to paint his panels."

"And I have to work terribly hard to keep house and paint as much as Bruce wants me

to," laughed Elinor. "I'm glad we have a Hannah Ann and a Henry, or I'm afraid you'd all suffer, for I'm simply going to *delve*. My trip has given me lots to work for, and I'm going to make use of it or die in the attempt."

"I'm going to go into that scheme with Miriam Halden for raising prize chickens," cried Patricia with rising enthusiasm. "I hated to give it up, but we'll go on with it now and we'll make our mark in the chicken world, if we can't rise to the fine arts just yet a while."

"What are you planning, Judy?" asked Bruce. "Volumes of travel talks?"

"No," said Judith solemnly. "I'm going to write some stories about Holland, of course, but the real purpose of my life for this fall—as long as the ground isn't frozen—will be to search for old Piet Hubert Van Kelt's silver plate."

Bruce roared at her impressive manner, but she merely nodded.

"I've been planning it all out," she said loftily. "And I've been thinking things very seriously, and I've come to the conclu-

sion that, whether there is going to be a dreadful war, like Bruce says there is, or whether it is only a fuss over nothing, it's a very good thing for us all to be going back to Greycroft. Home is the nicest place in the world after all."